

NOTES
ON
PHILIPPIANS

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LESSON ONE

1:1-8

1 Paul and Timothy,—It is here implied that Timothy was present with Paul when the letter to the Philippians was written and that he occupied a close and affectionate relationship with those who were addressed. It is also implied that he was entirely in sympathy with the sentiments expressed by the apostle in this letter. However, from the beginning to the end of the letter, Paul wrote in the first person singular, and in 2:19 he referred to Timothy in the third person. It is evident then that Timothy had no share in the composition of the letter. Whether he acted as the penman is a moot question. See 1 Corinthians 1:1,2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 1:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1.

servants of Christ Jesus,—In this phrase Paul referred to himself and Timothy as servants (Greek *douloi*, bondservants, slaves) of Christ, whereas in Colossians 1:1 he referred to himself as an apostle of Christ and to Timothy as his brother. It is noteworthy that only in three of his epistles, in this and in the two to the Thessalonians, he did not refer to himself as an apostle. It is plainly evident that he had no reason to mention his apostolate in these letters since it had never been called into question by the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica.

Concerning this omission of Paul's apostolic title in the Philippian letter, Ebard and Weisinger observed, "And how well does this agree with the contents of the epistle, which represents the church as resting on the foundation of a close personal relationship to the apostle, and which was immediately occasioned by his having to send his thanks for a favour he had received from them."

to all the saints in Christ Jesus—In the apostle's personal addresses in this letter, the word "all" occurs nine times. There probably had been complete unanimity among the Philippian saints in ministering to Paul's needs, and he felt special, comprehensive affection toward them that excluded none.

The word "saints" is from the *Greek hagios (hagios)*, meaning "holy, consecrated, sanctified." In its use here it means those who are separated from sin and consecrated to God, whose lives are dedicated to righteous living. That which makes them holy is their fellowship with Christ, because they dwell in Him and He in them. See 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:15,16; 2:5,9; 2 Peter 3:11; Ephesians 2:21.

that are at Philippi,—The saints Paul addressed in this letter were those at Philippi. This city is described in Acts 16:12 as "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony." It was formerly called Crenides (Fountains), from its numerous springs. It also at one

time bore the name of Datum. It was called Philippi in honor of Philip of Macedon, who enlarged and fortified it. It afterwards became celebrated as the scene of the famous battle of Philippi (B.C. 42), in which the army of Octavius and Anthony conquered that of Brutus and Cassius; and in honor of such a great victory it was patronized by the Emperor Augustus, who made it a Roman colony. Its inhabitants were Roman citizens, having the right of voting, governed by their own senate and magistrates, and not by the governor of the province, with the Roman law and the Latin language. It seems to have contained few Jews, as they had no synagogue, only a *Proseuche*, or place for prayer on a river-side. Its soil was productive and rich in minerals, which had yielded lucrative revenue, but which had apparently become exhausted. It was not on the sea. Its port was Neapolis.

Paul, with Silas, Timothy, and Luke, planted the gospel there during his second missionary journey, in about A.D. 51. After passing through Phrygia and Galatia, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel in the north (Bythinia) or in the south (Asia), but was directed to pass through Mysia to Troas, on the opposite coast from Macedonia. Here he had the vision of the man of Macedonia, who beseeched him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Paul and his fellow workers answered this call, sailing from Troas and in two days reaching Neapolis, proceeding speedily from there to Philippi, where they tarried "certain days." Here the apostle preached the gospel to Lydia and the other Jewish women who resorted to the *Proseuche* on the riverside. Lydia and her household accepted the gospel, being baptized into Christ. Later, while Paul and Silas were in the local prison, the apostle preached the gospel to the jailor and his household, who were also baptized into Christ. Thus a church was established in Philippi, which became one of the great churches of apostolic times. See Acts 16:6-40.

The Philippian letter was written from Rome while the apostle was in prison. The references to "Caesar's household" (4:22) and to "the praetorian guard" (1:13) confirm this. See Acts 28:16,20,30,31. The time of the writing was about A.D. 63.

with the bishops and deacons:—The apostle designated two special classes of saints in his address to *all* the saints in Philippi. The word "bishops" is from the Greek *episkopois* (*episkopos*), literally meaning "overseers." In the Septuagint it designates inspectors, superintendents, taskmasters (2 Kings 11:19; 2 Chronicles 34:12,17). In the New Testament it is synonymous with elders (Greek *presbuteroi*), designating the plurality of older, experienced men who serve as overseers in each local congregation. The use of these two words to designate different classes in the organization of the church is entirely foreign to the New Testament. "That they [presbyters or elders] did not differ from the bishops or overseers (as is acknowledged by Jerome on Titus 1:5 . . .) is evident from the fact that the words are used indiscriminately, Acts 20:17,28;

Titus 1:5,7; and that the duty of presbyters is described by the *episkopein*, 1 Peter 5:1 sq. . . ." (Joseph Thayer); "In the apostolic writings it [the word "bishop"] is synonymous with *presbyter* or *elder*; and no official distinction of the episcopate as a distinct order of the ministry is recognized" (Marvin R. Vincent).

The word "deacons" is from the Greek *diakonois* (*diakonos*), meaning "servants." *Diakonos* is variously used in the New Testament to designate Christ (Romans 15:8), a minister of the gospel (Ephesians 3:7), a follower of Christ (Ephesians 6:21), etc. It is, generally speaking, to be distinguished from *doulos*, a bondservant, slave. *Diakonos* views a servant in relation to his work; *doulos* views him in relation to his master. In its use in the passage now under consideration, *diakonois* designates a class of servants distinguished from the rest of the saints in Philippi. The qualifications for deacons are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

The seven men chosen to superintend the distribution of material goods to the poor widows in the Jerusalem church are commonly thought of as deacons. Although they are not expressly designated as such, their function is described by the word "serve" (Acts 6:2), which is from *diakoneo*, a form of the Greek word rendered as "deacon."

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.—Included in the address of every Pauline epistle is this wish that the readers may have *grace* and *peace*. These two words are related to one another as cause and effect; *grace* is the unmerited favor which expresses divine love, and *peace* is that inward state of harmony and tranquillity which results from the reception of grace. He who has received the unmerited favor of God in the forgiveness of his sins and who continues to stand in that grace, enjoys the wonderful peace referred to in this epistle (4:7). Cf. Romans 5:1,2. The grace and peace of which the apostle speaks are said to come from both the Father and Son, the *source* being the former and the *organ* by which they are communicated being the latter.

3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,—So deep was the apostle's affection for his Philippian brethren, so satisfactory had his personal relationship been with them, that he thanked God for *all* his remembrance of them. In the words "*my God*" he spoke of his own close personal relationship with God. See Psalms 63:1-3.

4 always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all—The Greek word for supplication is *deesis*, from *deomai*, literally meaning "to want," and thus distinctively signifies here a *petitionary* prayer offered on behalf of others. The special attachment Paul had for the Philippians is indicated by the comprehensive "always," "every," "all"; in every petition he made for them he always thanked God for all his remembrance of each and every one of them, excluding none.

making my supplication with joy,—The sum of the spirit of thanksgiving expressed in the Philippian letter is that of joy: “I rejoice, rejoice ye.” The joy Paul felt in his supplication of thanksgiving on behalf of the Philippians marked his high estimate of them; virtually everything in them had given him joy, and virtually nothing in them had given him sorrow.

5 for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel—The apostle now states what he gave thanks to God for in his supplication in behalf of the Philippians. The Greek word rendered as fellowship is *koinoia*, literally meaning “sharing in common (from *koinos*, common).” It here signifies the sharing in common with the apostle the basic work common to all Christians: the furtherance of the gospel. The Philippian church was especially diligent and alert in regard to this responsibility; they cooperated with the apostle in every way they could to see that the message of glad tidings concerning Christ the Saviour was proclaimed far and wide to dying sinners. As Joseph Lightfoot observed, “Fellowship here denotes cooperation in the widest sense, their participation with the apostle, whether in sympathy or in suffering, or in actual labour, or in any other way. At the same time their almsgiving was a signal instance of this cooperation [see 4:10,15,16], and seems to have been foremost in the apostle’s mind.”

Is the congregation of which you are a member actively engaged in the fellowship of which the apostle here speaks? It is obvious that any congregation whose only concern is “keeping house” for the Lord, which has no active program of generously supporting the preaching of the gospel in other places, is sorely displeasing to the Lord and is in grave danger of having its lampstand removed.

from the first day until now;—The apostle expressed special gratitude that the fellowship of the Philippians with him in furtherance of the gospel had existed from the first day of their having received the gospel until the present time, which means that their support of him in the gospel ministry, as they were able, was dependable. How unlike the Philippians in this regard are some of the churches today! They remind us of the church in Sardis, which the Lord censured: “I have found no works of thine perfected before my God” (Revelation 3:2). They will support for a while some hard-working, godly preacher in a worthy missionary effort and then arbitrarily cut off that support, making it necessary for him either to withdraw from the field or to seek aid from some other congregation. At its best, such a practice shows a lack of perception concerning Christian stewardship; at its worst, it is cruel and unkind in the anguish and hardship it causes the preacher and his family. If churches would see their support of missionary work bear fruit, they must follow the injunction of Galatians 6:9, “And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”

6 being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it—The basis of Paul's optimism concerning the good work of the Philippians in furthering the gospel was his confidence in the power of God working in and through them. The apostle affirmed that the good work they were accomplishing was begun by God, and he expressed assurance that God would also perfect or complete that work. It is an offence to every proper thought of God that He should be able to begin anything but not be able to finish it. See 1 Samuel 3:12; Isaiah 26:12. Of course, the faith and love of the Philippians is implied here as being necessary for the completion of their good work, but Paul insisted that the power for that completion came from God and not from themselves.

Since every worthy effort of any faithful, loving Christian, both its beginning and completion, must be attributed to the power of God, there can be no room for self-glorification. The glory belongs only to God through Christ. See John 15:4,5; 1 Corinthians 1:30,31; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Galatians 2:20; 5:6.

until the day of Jesus Christ:—There can be no question as to what is meant by this expression in the sense that it is generally used in the New Testament. It is the day of the Lord's second coming, when He will be revealed in His glory. Paul affirmed that the absolute end of the works which are begun and perfected by God will be on this notable day. This will be the day when Christ receives His faithful ones unto Himself in eternal glory (John 14:1-3). Thus it behooves every Christian to so live in dependence on and submission to the will and power of God as if Jesus were coming at any time (Matthew 10:22; Luke 12:35-40). And the Lord's second coming is, in a sense, always imminent because of the imminency of the Christian's death, when all his earthly endeavors on behalf of Christ will come to an end. See James 4:13,14. The continual prayer in the heart of every faithful Christian is, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

7 even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart,—The apostle expressed his warm affection for the Philippians as the grounds for his supplications on their behalf and his confidence that God would perfect His good work of grace in them. But it was not his affection or love for them in the general sense of the term that Paul had in mind. Surely, his love for them could not alone guarantee their continual faithfulness to the Lord. Was Judas not cherished in a warmer heart than Paul's? What made his love cherish such a confident persuasion regarding them is expressed in the concluding words of the verse:

inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace.—The Philippians occupied a special place in Paul's heart because of

his knowledge of the great things God's grace had done and was doing through them, thus making his love for them confident as to their continual fidelity.

The word "defence" (Greek *apologia*) here refers to the preparing of the ground by the answering of all objections to the gospel; the word "confirmation" refers to the positive presentation of the gospel and plea for its acceptance on the basis of the ground so prepared. "The two together will thus comprise all modes of preaching and extending the truth" (Joseph Lightfoot).

It was the grace of God that made it possible for Paul to endure the bonds of his imprisonment and to defend and confirm the gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:10); and thus the Philippians were partakers of, sharers in, this grace in all that they did on behalf of the apostle and his work: their sympathy with him in his sufferings, their prayers for him, the material support they extended him. Then too they partook with Paul of divine grace when they themselves suffered for the cause of Christ, faithfully defending and confirming the gospel in the face of every hindrance and difficulty. In light of the foregoing, Paul had every reason to be confident that the Philippians would continue to trust in and love the Lord so that He would perfect the work He began in them. See 1:28-30; 2:25; 4:14-20.

8 For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus.—So intent was Paul that the Philippians would be convinced of his deep longing for them that he called on God as his witness to the sincerity of the affirmation he here made. The Greek word rendered as "tender mercies" is *splagchnois*, properly denoting the bowels, which were regarded by the recipients of the epistle as the seat of the affections. The longing which Paul here expressed was "in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." This signifies that the tender feeling he had for his Philippian brethren was not merely from natural affection, but from his devoted, faithful relationship to Christ.

Questions

Verse 1. Discuss Paul's reference to Timothy. Why did Paul refer to himself as a servant rather than an apostle? What is the significance of the apostle's reference to *all* the saints? Give some details concerning the city of Philippi. Who were the bishops and deacons?

Verse 2. What is the meaning and relationship to each other of the words "grace" and "peace," and why are they said to come from both the Father and Son?

Verse 3. What is the significance of Paul's thanksgiving to God for *all* his remembrance of the Philippians?

Verse 4. What is the meaning of the word "supplication"? What sig-

nificance is given in connection with this word by the comprehensive "always," "every," "all"? Why was Paul able to offer his supplication on behalf of the Philippians with joy?

Verse 5. What is the meaning of the word "fellowship"? How did the Philippians have fellowship with Paul in furtherance of the gospel? What was the significance of this fellowship "from the first day until now"?

Verse 6. Discuss the basis for Paul's optimism concerning the work of the Philippians in furthering the gospel. In this connection, what is the significance of the phrase "until the day of Jesus Christ"?

Verse 7. Discuss the reason why Paul's love for the Philippians cherished such a confident persuasion that they would continue to be faithful to the Lord.

Verse 8. Why did Paul call on God as his witness as to the sincerity of the affirmation he made concerning his longing after the Philippians? What is the meaning of the words "tender mercies"? Why did the apostle use these words in connection with Jesus Christ?

LESSON TWO

1:9-16

9 And this I pray,—The prayer of Paul in this verse and the two to follow expresses his longing for the Philippians stated in the preceding verse. This longing was not merely a sentimental, aimless affection, but the sincere desire that the Philippians would have that which they needed for their spiritual growth and prosperity.

that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment;—It was not love as such that Paul desired for the Philippians. His prayer assumed that they already abounded in love to him, to God and Christ, to their fellow saints, and to sinners. But he prayed that their love would abound yet *more and more*, which is the basis for every phase of spiritual progress and growth.

In praying that their love would increase in *knowledge* and *all discernment*, the apostle desired that it should be an intelligent and practical affection that would motivate them to lead godly, fruitful, and useful lives. The word “knowledge” concerns the principles of godly living, and the word “discernment” concerns the practical application of these principles. It is not enough that the Christian should know the principles taught in God’s word; he must also know their proper and practical applications. For example, he must indeed know the principle taught in Galatians 6:10, to “work that which is good toward all men.” But he must also have the discerning power to know what is actually good in his treatment of others. Too often what is purported to be a *good* work is actually a *bad work*. Giving money to a beggar may only encourage him to laziness; indulging a child’s whims may contribute to delinquent behavior; etc. Such actions can be motivated by the sincere desire to fulfill God’s will concerning the working of good toward others, but which fail to discern what is truly good for them.

We must always remember that the love which reflects the love of God is not a wild, ignorant enthusiasm, but the warm affection that seeks to know God’s will and to properly apply that will in all the circumstances of life. Unless love is directed in the right channels, it can never fulfill the Lord’s plans and purposes concerning His followers. Indeed, love without knowledge and discernment is as vain as knowledge and discernment without love. See 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Hebrews 5:14; 2 Peter 3:18.

10 so that ye may approve the things that are excellent;—The word “approve” is from the Greek *dokimazo*, which means “to test, such as metals tested in order to determine their nature.” Paul affirms that those Christians whose love grows in knowledge and discernment will be able not only to distinguish good from bad but also the things

that are best from among those that are good. Many of the choices that Christians must make in life are between good and good. In proportion as love abounds in knowledge and discernment, it sharpens the moral perceptions to determine what is *best* when confronted by such choices. And no injustice is done to Paul's meaning here when we conclude that the Christian who has knowledgeable, discerning love will strive for excellency in whatever he does in the Master's service. If he preaches or teaches the divine word, he will not be content with presenting good lessons but excellent ones; if he is a parent, he will not be content with doing a good job in rearing his children but an excellent one; etc.

that ye may be sincere—One meaning attached to *eilikrineis*, the Greek word rendered as sincere, is that of "examined in the sunlight and found to be without flaw, speck, or blemish." Applied to the Christian this word means that which is pure as to his inner person, describing one who is "pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8), whose motivation is free from deceit and hypocrisy. This is the condition of the heart of every Christian who abounds in knowledgeable, discerning love.

and void of offence—The Greek word for offence, *aproskoptoi*, can be rendered as "stumbling." The phrase can be explained either as *not stumbling* or *not causing others to stumble* (1 Corinthians 10:32). Both senses may be included. As the Christian's love abounds in knowledge and discernment, he will strive both to keep himself from stumbling and from being a stumbling block to others. He neither wants himself nor others to miss heaven.

unto the day of Christ;—Paul here relates both the inward and outward sanctity of the faithful Christian, whose love grows in knowledge and discernment, to the second coming of Christ, to that wondrous day when the Saviour will give the crown of righteousness to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). See comments on 1:6.

II being filled with the fruits of righteousness,—The Greek word rendered here as "fruits" is singular, defining the one harmonious whole of the fruit-bearing Christian life, answering to "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22) and "fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). The Philippian saints were not merely to have *some* fruit of righteousness but were to be *filled* with it. That is what Jesus had in mind concerning His disciples when He said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

which are through Jesus Christ,—It is only as men are brought into union with Christ that they can bear the fruit involved in Christian living (John 15:1-5). See Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 2:20. As John Calvin expressed it, "We are wild and useless olive trees until we are grafted into Christ, who, by his living root, makes us fruit-bearing branches."

unto the glory and praise of God.—See again John 15:8. The word “glory” is here used synonymously with “honor.” To honor and praise God with our lips is not enough; we must also honor and praise him with our lives. In everything the Christian seeks to do through the power of Christ, he must be motivated by the desire to honor and praise Him who is the ultimate source of all good (James 1:17). See Matthew 5:16; John 17:4.

12 Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel;—The Philippians had heard of the apostle’s imprisonments, first in Caesarea and then in Rome; they evidently were apprehensive that such calamities would hinder the spread of the gospel. But the apostle assured them that it was quite the opposite. What had happened to him actually gave him opportunities to further the gospel that he would not have had under other circumstances.

The apostle here struck the same triumphant note which rises above personal indignity and suffering that he later expressed in 2 Timothy 2:9, “. . . I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound.” The power of God’s word cannot be nullified by any human power, and the providence of God in furthering His cause can always rise above any and all adverse circumstances. Happy are those Christians who see opportunities for furthering the gospel whatever their circumstances may be! See 1 Corinthians 16:9.

13 so that my bonds became manifest in Christ—Paul was not in bonds during his Roman imprisonment simply as an ordinary, private prisoner, but it became publicly known that he was so bound because of his relation and loyalty to Jesus Christ. That is what the apostle had in mind when he referred to himself as “the prisoner of the Lord” (Ephesians 4:1).

throughout the whole praetorian guard,—The praetorians forming the imperial guard, ten thousand in number, consisted of picked men who were of Italian birth. This body was instituted by Augustus and was called by him *praetoriae cohortes*, praetorian cohorts, in imitation of the select group which attended the person of the praetor or Roman general. He originally stationed only three thousand of them, three cohorts, at Rome, and dispersed the remainder in the adjacent Italian towns. Under Tiberius they were all assembled at Rome in a fortified camp. They were distinguished by double pay and special privileges. Their term of service was originally twelve years, later increased to sixteen. They all seem to have had the same rank as centurians in the regular legions. They became the most powerful body of the empire; the emperors were obliged to court their favor, and each emperor on his accession was expected to give them a liberal bonus.

Paul was under the charge of these troops, the soldiers relieving each other in mounting guard over the prisoner, who was bound to the guard's hand by a chain. In referring to himself as "an ambassador in chains" (Ephesians 6:20), he used the specific word for "coupling-chain." His contact with different members of the corps in succession explains the statement that his bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard. Many of his custodians must have afforded him the opportunity of preaching the gospel to them. Cf. Acts 28:16.

and to all the rest;—Not only did the praetorian guard learn of Paul's relation and loyalty to Christ as the reason for his bonds, but others also. By word of mouth beginning with the praetorian guard, the news of the apostle's bonds as "the prisoner of Christ" must have spread throughout the imperial household and the entire city of Rome, thus further spreading the gospel. See 4:22.

14 and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds,—If this is the correct rendering of the Greek text, the apostle here distinguished between his brethren who were united with him in the Lord from his Jewish brethren, "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3). However, the more accurate rendering connects "in the Lord" with "being confident"; for example, the Revised Standard Version: "and most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment." Cf. Galatians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:4. The sense Paul probably had in mind was that the grace or power of God which worked through his bonds in furthering the gospel had instilled in most of the Roman saints a greater confidence in and dependence on the Lord to accomplish His work. They obviously concluded that if the Lord could do great things through the imprisoned apostle, He could also do great things through them whatever adverse circumstances they faced.

The word "most" implies that some of the Roman saints were not inspired to a greater confidence in the Lord through the apostle's bonds. There may have been some of them who saw the adversity the apostle faced but not the divine power that worked through his bonds to further the gospel. Some of them may have become so discouraged by the apostle's bonds that they gave up the faith, fearing that they too would be imprisoned if they continued to bear testimony concerning Christ. Cf. 2 Timothy 4:10.

are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.—The result of the confidence in the Lord that Paul's bonds inspired in most of the Roman saints was a greater boldness to preach the divine word, the gospel, without fear of those who were opposed to Christ and His teaching. Such faithful saints realized that the Lord's victorious power was continually with them as it was with Paul. See Matthew 10:26-33; 1 Corinthians 15:57,58; Hebrews 13:5,6.

The boldness required to profess Christ within the precincts of the imperial palace is illustrated by the *graffito* or wall-scribble discovered in 1857 among the ruins of the Palatine. It is a caricature of Christ on the cross, with ass's head, while on the left appears a Christian in an attitude of adoration. Underneath are scrawled the words "Alexamenos worships God."

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife;—Those referred to here were not preaching Christ because of any desire to exalt Him but because of their envious and contentious attitude toward Paul. The gospel had come to Rome before Paul, and some of its first promulgators were making claims to priority. Because of the apostle's success in preaching the gospel, the influence of these who hitherto enjoyed special prominence had faded. This was their grievance. They resented his presence in Rome, even in chains. Thus they hoped that their preaching of Christ would show more success than that of the apostle, since being unfettered they had greater latitude in reaching the masses and could put the apostle's work in the shade, so to speak, and regain the prominence they formerly enjoyed. Instead of thinking of themselves as co-workers with the apostle in the Lord's service, they thought of themselves as his competitors. Are there not preachers today who are envious and contentious toward their fellow preachers? They preach Christ in the same competitive spirit as their Roman counterparts, desiring to outdo their brethren in the Lord's work and thus to gain greater prominence than they in the brotherhood. They desire to exalt themselves, not Christ.

and some also of good will:—The good will designated here must have been expressly toward Paul, in contrast to those who manifested ill will toward him in their envious, contentious preaching of Christ. But this attitude of good will toward the apostle implies a correct attitude also toward the Lord, with the desire to see His cause successful through the endeavors of all who preach Christ.

16 the one do it of love,—See Ephesians 4:15. Those whose attitude was that of good will both toward the Lord and Paul were motivated by love in their preaching. Loving the Lord, they preached the gospel with the sole object of exalting and glorifying Him through the salvation of sinners. Loving Paul, they did not preach the gospel with any feeling of competition against him, but with the realization that they were his co-workers in furtherance of the Lord's cause. Having a strong sense of the loving care that members of the church should have for each other, they keenly felt that the successful efforts of the apostle were the cause of rejoicing for the whole body of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Indeed, "love envieth not" (1 Corinthians 13:4).

knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel;—The word

“set” designates the apostle’s work in defending the gospel as being of divine appointment (Acts 22:14,15; 1 Thessalonians 3:3). For the meaning of the word “defence,” from the Greek *apologia*, see comments on 1:7, also the author’s *New Testament Word Study, Volume 2*, pp. 11-13.

Those in Rome who preached the gospel out of good will toward Paul, who loved both him and the Lord, knew that his defence of the gospel was not done out of any self-seeking, self-exalting motive, but with the sincere desire to exalt Him who had appointed him to this great work. Having the same motive as the apostle in their preaching, they obviously cooperated with him in every way they could to see that the gospel was defended from all charges made against it so that sinners would accept Christ as their Saviour.

Questions

Verse 9. Discuss Paul's prayer that the Philippians' love would abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment.

Verse 10. What is the meaning of the word "approve"? Discuss the Christian's responsibility to make the *best* choices possible in life and to strive for excellency in whatever he does in the Master's service. Discuss Paul's prayer that the Philippians would "be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ."

Verse 11. What is the significance of the Christian being filled with the fruits of righteousness? Discuss the divine power and proper motive for bearing the fruit of righteousness.

Verse 12. Discuss Paul's imprisonment as an opportunity for the progress of the gospel.

Verse 13. Discuss the meaning of Paul's bonds as being the result of his relation to Christ and how this was manifest throughout "the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest."

Verse 14. How did Paul's bonds instill confidence in the Lord in most of his Christian brethren in Rome? What is implied here by the word "most"? What was the result of the confidence that Paul's bonds inspired in most of the Roman saints?

Verse 15. What was the motive of those who preached Christ of envy and strife? What was the motive of those who preached Christ of good will?

Verse 16. How did those who preached Christ of good will and love feel concerning Paul's labors in defending the gospel?

LESSON THREE

1:17-24

17 but the other proclaim Christ of faction,—Those whom Paul portrayed as preaching Christ of envy and strife were guilty of a factional spirit, of worthless self-seeking and ambition. Desiring to outdo the apostle in their preaching, their goal was to build up a clique or faction rather than the cause of Christ. And there are those today in the church who proclaim Christ in the same self-seeking, ambitious, factional spirit.

not sincerely,—The Greek word for “sincerely” is *hagnos*, meaning “purely, with unmixed motives.” The adjective form of this word means “pure, in the sense of chaste, free from admixture of evil, and is once applied to God (1 John 3:3).” “Not sincerely” is explained by “in pretence” (verse 18). Those whom Paul here portrayed would leave the impression on their hearers that they desired only to exalt Christ the Saviour in their preaching; but the apostle knew that it was only a pretence, that they were patently insincere.

thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds.—Those in the church who were envious of Paul thought that their success in preaching Christ would increase his sufferings by adding gall to his bonds. They thought that Paul, like themselves, sought his own glory and so would be mortified at their success over his. The next verse shows how wrong they were.

18 What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.—Unlike his enemies in the church, Paul’s great desire was not to exalt himself and to build up a faction, but to exalt Christ and to build up His cause. Thus he rejoiced, and would continue to rejoice, whenever Christ was preached, whether “in pretence” (with the wrong motive of self-seeking) or “in truth” (with the right motive of love for Christ and the desire to exalt Him).

It is illogical to conclude that those who preached with a wrong motive presented a different doctrine concerning Christ from those who preached with a right motive. The difference in their preaching was not in substance but in purpose. Paul would not have rejoiced in the preaching of his enemies if they had not presented the gospel in its integrity, because a false, perverted gospel is powerless to save. Thus those who preached with a wrong motive could not have been such as the Judaizers, who preached a different gospel than that preached by the apostle. See Galatians 1:6-10. However, a wrong motive in preaching the unadulterated gospel of Christ does not nullify its saving power. Thus Paul could rejoice at the good results of the bad intentions of his enemies who preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the only means of salvation.

19 For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation,—Some commentators believe that the salvation designated here is Paul's deliverance from captivity. But the context (verses 20-23) indicates that the apostle contemplated his heavenly salvation. What was it that would turn out to his salvation? Evidently, the preaching of Christ, both by the sincere and insincere. It was by his faithfulness in preaching the gospel in the adversity of his imprisonment that the sincere were inspired to increase their efforts to save souls through their own proclamation of the Saviour. And his enemies were incited to a great preaching of Christ with the desire to outdo him and thus increase his sufferings. Such faithfulness on the part of the apostle that would incite both the sincere and insincere to greater efforts in proclaiming Christ would be put down to his heavenly account. And notice the confidence he expressed in the words "I know," which reminds us of his affirmation in 2 Timothy 1:12.

through your supplication—The apostle related the supplication (Greek *deeseos*, entreaty) of the Philippians to his salvation. Obviously, they prayed that he would be faithful to the Lord in the face of all adversity, fulfilling his responsibility to preach the gospel, which would turn out to his salvation. And Paul knew that God was answering their supplication. Cf. 1 Peter 1:5-9.

and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,—Paul also related the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead) to his salvation. Cf. Romans 8:9. The word "supply" signifies the furnishing of whatever is necessary. Paul did not have in mind here the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in furnishing him the subject matter of his preaching, but the supply of the Spirit in sustaining and strengthening him in the face of all his trials and tribulations. He thus affirmed that without this supply of the Spirit, he would not be able to continue in the faith and receive eternal salvation. And every other Christian needs this same supply of the indwelling Spirit to sustain and strengthen him so that he too can maintain an unwavering faith in the Lord in the face of all adversity. See Romans 8:26-28; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 10:29; 1 John 5:4.

Paul's eternal salvation, as well as that of every other Christian, also depended on the supply and presence of the Holy Spirit in order that he would be resurrected unto eternal life (Romans 8:11; John 5:28,29). The supply and presence of the Spirit is also the guarantee God gives the faithful Christian that he will receive the heavenly inheritance (Ephesians 1:13,14).

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope,—The word "hope" here signifies desire, the result of which was the apostle's expectation. The Greek word for "earnest expectation" occurs only in one other place in the New Testament: Romans 8:19. It is *apokaradokian*, literally

signifying "expectation with uplifted head (Luke 21:28) and outstretched neck" (David Brown). Heinrich Meyer states that it pertains here to "the waiting expectation that continues on the strain until the goal is reached."

that in nothing shall I be put to shame,—Paul's earnest expectation and hope was that he would do nothing which in any way would disgrace himself in the eyes of the Lord—even if the opposition of his enemies grew more virulent, even if his bonds became more oppressive, and even if he were brought before Caesar in person.

but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body,—Here the apostle intended that "boldness" be the opposite of "be put to shame." Instead of being put to shame by cravenly foregoing the preaching of the gospel in the face of opposition, to disgrace himself and the cause of Christ, Paul affirmed that he would continue to boldly preach the gospel during his imprisonment, even as he had previously done. Thus the body which he used to boldly preach Christ, to suffer for Him and His cause, was actually the means of magnifying or glorifying Him. Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20.

whether by life or by death.—Paul was not omniscient; he could not determine by himself alone how the case would terminate, whether his forthcoming trial before Caesar would end in his acquittal or in his death. But whatever was to happen, his confident expectation was that Christ would be magnified in him. If he continued to live, he would magnify Christ by faithfully preaching Him and living for Him. If, however, his trial resulted in his death, he would still magnify Christ as one who was martyred for Him and His cause, to set an example before all Christians of fortitude, faith, and hope in the face of death. As Albert Barnes observed, "The effect of this state of feeling on the mind of Paul must have been most happy. In whatever way his trial terminated, he felt assured that the great object for which he lived would be promoted. Christ would be honored, perhaps, as much by his dying as a martyr, as by his living many years to proclaim His gospel . . . Come what might, the purpose which he had most at heart would be secured, and the name of the Saviour would be honored."

21 For to me to live is Christ,—The words "to me" are emphatic, whatever the meaning of life may be to others. No finer portrayal of a soul that is truly surrendered to Christ can possibly be found than this. Paul affirmed that his life would be intolerable, even inconceivable, except as his ego was merged into Christ's. Thus he declared, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). His philosophy of living was that the sum

total of his life belonged to Christ: his time, strength, ability, body, soul, and spirit. It was his complete surrender, dedication, commitment, and conversion to Christ that made him such a great Christian. Can you honestly say that living to you, the entirety of your life, is *Christ*, that yours is truly a Christ-intoxicated, Christ-led, Christ-dominated life? See Matthew 6:24; 16:24.

C. J. Vaughan's comments are most appropriate here: "The business of my life is Christ; my energy, my activity, my occupation, my interests, is all Christ. Paul regarded everything that he had to do, and he regarded everything that befell him, only in relation to, in its bearing upon, Christ. The words describe a condition widely different from that of most of us. Before Paul could say that his outward life was Christ, he must have been able to say it of his inward life. Before Christ can be to any one his object, his business, his work, his life, He must first be his trust and his hope, his known and true and tried refuge from guilt, from fear, from restlessness, from sin."

and to die is gain.—Not only would Paul's death magnify Christ (verse 20), but it would also result in the greatest of all personal gain: to depart and be with Christ in the state of eternal bliss (verse 23). The gain of which Paul spoke regarding death is inseparably connected with the life he spoke regarding Christ. Thus the practical import of this entire verse is that if we would die the Christian's death, we must live the Christian's life; if we would find it gain to die, we must find it Christ to live. See Revelation 14:13. No one who truly lives for Christ, who trusts in His merits and grace, will face death with foreboding and dread, as if it were loss. One who can honestly say, "For to me to live is Christ," will face death with the confident expectation of gaining that which is infinitely superior to all that this world has to offer: to live with Christ forever in complete freedom from all pain, sorrow, and tears. Such glorious gain ought to be an inducement to every Christian to follow the example of Paul by courageously standing up for Christ in the face of all opposition.

22 But if to live in the flesh,—if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not.—Various interpretations have been given to this quite difficult and disjointed passage. The following quotations express the probable meaning: "The grammar of the passage reflects the conflict of feeling in the apostle's mind. He is tossed to and fro between the desire to labor for Christ in life and the desire to be united with Christ by death. The abrupt and disjointed sentences express this hesitation" (Joseph Lightfoot); "To himself life seems to offer less than death. But as he writes, another aspect of the question arises in his mind. The thought of the services he may render to Christ's people is to be set against the thought of the joy of being with Christ. Between these he wavers, and the contending impulses, as

they find utterance, leave their trace in the broken sentences that follow; imperfect and doubtful in construction, but yielding an insight into his mind and heart than which none deeper is to be gained anywhere in his writings" (Dean Gwynne).

The word "know" in this passage, from the Greek *gnorizo*, is used in the sense of *to declare* or *make known*, as elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 2:15; John 17:26; Acts 2:28; Colossians 4:7; etc.) Paul thus affirmed, in effect, that if his continuing to live would be fruitful for the church, he would not make known his personal choice in the matter. He thus implied that such a choice as to whether he lived or died was God's alone to make.

23 But I am in a strait betwixt the two,—The word "two" refers back to the life and death previously mentioned. Paul described himself as pressed on both sides, between life and death. He was literally saying, "I am held together by life and death so that I cannot incline either way." Of course, the only resolution he could make to such a dilemma, which every likeminded Christian will also make, is expressed in James 4:15, "If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that."

having the desire to depart and be with Christ;—Although Paul recognized that the choice concerning whether he lived or died was only God's to make, he expressed how he personally felt about the matter, his personal preference already expressed in verse 21 of death with its gain. The word "desire" in the Greek literally means "a passionate desire." The Greek word for "to depart," *analousai* (*analuō*), originally meant "to unloose, undo again"; e.g. Homer speaks of Penelope's will, "During the night she *undid* it." The word is also used to designate the loosing of a ship from its moorings and of breaking up a camp. Antiochus, having attempted to rob the temple in Persepolis, was put to flight by the inhabitants, and *broke up* (*analelukos*) and departed from the city. The same figure is used of one who changes his residence: "He *broke up* at Los Angeles and moved to Seattle." Since Paul was a tent maker and referred to the human body as a tent (2 Corinthians 5:1), he used the word as the metaphor of striking a tent, just as a military organization would do in breaking camp to move to another location. And so Paul's passionate desire was to strike the tent of his mortal body, to depart from this earthly life and go to be with Christ. See 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Acts 7:59. Such a desire expressed great trust in the promises of the Lord and a steadfast, unmovable hope of being with Him after this earthly sojourn was over.

for it is very far better:—Paul affirmed that it would be much better (the literal significance of the Greek) for him to be at home with Christ than to continue living in a body that was subjected to sickness, suffering, and sorrow.

24 yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake.—

The phrase "abide in the flesh" has the idea "to live in a mortal body, to cling to this present life with all its inconveniences." Even though the apostle personally preferred to depart from this life and be with Christ, he knew that to live in the flesh was much more needful or better for his fellow Christians, whose faith would be strengthened by his example and words of encouragement. His death would be very much better for himself, but his life was very much better for others.

Questions

Verse 17. What is meant by proclaiming Christ of faction, not sincerely? How did those who so preached believe that they would raise up affliction for Paul in his bonds?

Verse 18. What is meant by "in pretence or in truth"? Why did Paul continually rejoice that Christ was being preached even though from a bad motive?

Verse 19. How would the preaching of others, both from a bad and good motive, turn out to Paul's salvation? What was the connection between the apostle's salvation and the supplication of the Philippians and the supply of the Spirit?

Verse 20. How would Paul fulfill his earnest expectation and hope that he would not be put to shame, thus to magnify Christ in his body, whether by life or death?

Verse 21. Discuss Paul's personal philosophy of living. Is this also your personal philosophy? Why would death be gain to such a person as Paul?

Verse 22. Discuss in its context Paul's statement, "what I shall choose I know not."

Verse 23. What did Paul mean by being 'in a strait betwixt the two'? Discuss the apostle's desire to depart and be with Christ, which would be very far better.

Verse 24. Why was it more needful for the sake of the Philippians that Paul should continue to abide in the flesh?

LESSON FOUR

1:25-30; 2:1,2

25 And having this confidence,—Paul's confidence here is that of abiding in the flesh for the benefit of the Philippians, referred to in the preceding verse. We are not, however, to conclude that this is a prophetic utterance. The apostle did not determine for God, who alone is omniscient, what the outcome would be; but he did express his personal conviction in the matter. The word "confidence" in the Greek means "to persuade," and it is in the perfect tense. It designates a strong conviction resulting from a completed process of pondering over a matter until one is persuaded of it. Paul's persuasion here is typical of the unselfish spirit that characterized his life as a Christian. Having pondered over the need which the Philippians had of his ministry, he came to the strong conviction that they needed him more than he needed to be with Christ just then. Because of his unselfish sense of the need they had for him, he was persuaded that God would spare his life so that he could be with them again. That his confidence was not in vain, that he may have indeed returned from his first captivity to Philippi, is suggested by 1 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 22.

I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all,—The word "know" is not to be pressed as meaning absolute necessity (1:27; 2:23), but it is to be considered here in the context as denoting the apostle's earnest desire and strong conviction that he would be permitted not only to abide *per se*, but that he would be able to abide with his Philippian brethren.

for your progress and joy in the faith;—Paul first expressed the desire that his presence with the Philippians would result in their *progress* in the faith or spiritual growth, answering to his prayer for them in 1:9-11. Both by teaching and example he would labor to build them up in the most holy faith. See Jude 20; Romans 10:17; 2 Peter 3:18.

The second desire the apostle expressed was that his presence with the Philippians would result in their *joy* in the faith. Cf. Romans 15:13. It is axiomatic that spiritual progress and joy go hand in hand; the more the Christian *progresses* in the faith, the greater is his *joy* in the faith. See 4:4.

26 that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.—Christ is conceived as the sphere in which the matter of glorying abounds, a glorying evolved within the sphere of life in Christ, and enjoyed only by those to whom to live is Christ. Thus the injunction, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). However, Paul's presence with the Philippians was

to be conceived as the immediate cause of their glorying since all his work on their behalf would contribute to their spiritual growth and joy in Christ; hence *in me*. Cf, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ:—The phrase “manner of life” is from the single Greek word *politeuesthe*. It is defined in a footnote of the American Standard Version as “behave as citizens worthily.” It is used in the papyri in the sense of “I live the life of a citizen”; “I live the life of a member of a citizen body.” Here the Philippian saints were exhorted to be aware of their heavenly citizenship and thus so conduct themselves that they would exalt, adorn, and glorify the gospel of Christ. Writing to the Philippians, Polycarp said, “If we perform our duties under Him as simple citizens, He will promote us to a share in His sovereignty.”

that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state,—Even though the apostle had expressed a strong confidence that he would be with his Philippian brethren again, he left some doubt as to the matter, recognizing the possibility that God would not permit him to fulfill this confidence. In order to include both alternatives, for Paul to abide or not to abide with the Philippians, the word “hear” must contain the meaning of *know*. Whether or not he would be permitted to be with them again, he desired to know or learn of their spiritual state.

that ye stand fast in one spirit,—The Greek word *stekete*, rendered as “stand fast,” signifies to hold one’s ground and to remain firm at one’s post, without going back or being shaken by the attacks of the enemy. The words “one spirit” designate the disposition and attitude of unity that should prevail in the Lord’s church, which is the fruit of partaking of the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 4:3-6. Paul knew that the devil’s policy is always to divide and conquer. Thus, in effect, his exhortation to the saints in Philippi was that they should hold their ground as a united front, bound by the spirit of togetherness or unity, against their archenemy the devil.

with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;—The word “soul” is used here as the seat of the reason, affections, will, and purposes; it thus answers to “one soul” in Acts 4:32. The phrase “faith of the gospel” means the system of teaching or doctrine as revealed in the gospel. As they stood fast in the disposition of togetherness or unity, the Philippians were to strive with one concerted mind or purpose to maintain the integrity and purity of the gospel system. The word “striving” in the Greek literally portrays an athletic contest. Paul here thought of the Philippians as a team, cooperatively working against all opposition to uphold and defend “the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

28 and in nothing be affrighted by the adversaries:—The Greek word rendered as “affrighted” occurs only here in the New Testament. It literally portrays the terror of a startled horse. Thus Plutarch said, “The multitude is not easy to handle so that it is safe for any one to take reins; but it should be held sufficient, if, not being *scared* by sight or sound, like a shy and fickle animal, it, accepts mastery.” The word “adversaries” designates the enemies of the gospel, those through whom the devil works in contention against the faith of the gospel. In Philippi these adversaries were the pagan Greeks who vehemently opposed a faith that forbade their idolatry. The Philippian saints were not to be afraid of such opposition, like horses that take fright and bolt, knowing that the Lord was with them. Cf. Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 13:6.

which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation,—The Greek word for “evident token” is *endeixes*, used only here and in Romans 3:25,26; 2 Corinthians 8:24. It literally means “a pointing out.” It was used in Attic law of “a writ of indictment.” It later came to mean “a demonstration or proof,” which is the meaning in this passage. In contending hopelessly against the Philippian saints, who had God on their side and who refused to be terrified by any opposition, the adversaries of whom Paul spoke were being given evident proof, if they would only so perceive, that they were rushing on to their own perdition or destruction. And in their unified, firm, unwavering stand for the faith of the gospel, the Philippian saints were being given ample proof that they were on the way to eternal salvation. See Romans 5:3,4.

and that from God;—The word “that” refers back to the phrase “evident token”; that is, the persecution the Philippian saints were undergoing was clear evidence from God that the persecutors were on the way to perdition and the persecuted were on the way to heaven. Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:4,5.

29 because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf:—The Greek word for “hath been granted” is *echaristhe* (*charizomai*), literally meaning “gift of grace.” The belief of the Philippian saints in reference to Christ, which had given them access to His salvation, was made possible by God’s grace, unmerited favor, through “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), the hearing of which could alone produce faith in Christ (Romans 1:16; 10:17). See Acts 13:27. But Paul insisted that suffering in behalf of Christ is also a gift of God’s grace, unmerited favor. The Philippian saints suffered when they were persecuted because of their loyal stand for Him and His teaching. Instead of thinking of it as a curse, they were to think of it as a blessing and privilege, a token of God’s favor toward them. “God has granted you the high privilege of suffering for Christ; this is the surest sign that He looks on you with favor” (Joseph Lightfoot). Cf. Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:12-14. “Suffering

was the marriage gift when they were espoused to Christ: the bounty when they enlisted in His service. Becoming one with Him they entered into the fellowship of his suffering (3:10). The gift was not suffering *as such*. Its meaning and value lay in its being *for His sake* [in his behalf]. The Macedonian churches, and the Philippian church especially, were preeminently suffering churches. See 2 Cor. 8:2" (Marvin R. Vincent).

30 having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.—The word "conflict" is translated from the Greek *agona* (*agon*), used of an athletic contest. It is the derivation of our word "agony." The apostle used it to describe his untiring work for the Lord in the face of all opposition. When he preached at Philippi he suffered persecution (Acts 16:19-40; 1 Thessalonians 2:2). This was the conflict the Philippian saints *saw* in him. And now they *heard* of the conflict in him that he was enduring from his imprisonment in Rome. When the Philippians themselves suffered in behalf of Christ, they were following the example of Paul. Cf. Matthew 10:24,25; 1 Corinthians 11:1. It was as if the apostle were saying to them, "I am in nothing affrighted by my adversaries; so ought not you to be. I am standing fast, striving for the faith of the gospel in the face of all opposition; so ought you to do."

2:1 If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ,—The word "therefore" implies that Paul was here expanding on the exhortation of 1:27, "in one spirit, with one soul, etc." He urged four motives to inculcate the unity of which he was about to speak in the next verse.

The first motive the apostle designated was "exhortation in Christ." The Philippians were to strive for unity on the basis of the will of Christ, because he exhorted them to do so. This, of course, should be the basic motive for unity in any congregation: loyalty to the exhortation or teaching of Christ.

if any consolation of love,—In the Greek the word "consolation" signifies "a word which comes to the side of one to stimulate and encourage him." Thus the idea of encouragement is here contained in the use of this word. The love associated with it primarily is divine love. Christ did indeed exhort the Philippians to unity, but He did so through the appeal or encouragement of His love for them. Their appreciation of the divine love which had saved them through Christ would encourage them to live in unity. See Ephesians 2:14-17. And, of course, the love they had for each other, which reflected the Lord's love for them, would also incite them to live in unity.

if any fellowship of the Spirit,—If the Philippians had an intimate, loving, forbearing relationship with each other because they jointly enjoyed the fellowship of or participation in the Holy Spirit, bearing the

fruit of the Spirit, they would inevitably give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). The presence and power of the Spirit in the lives of Christians are never an incitement to confusion and factionalism, but always to peace and unity. Cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33.

if any tender mercies and compassions,—This is the fourth and final reason given for the Philippians to live in harmony with each other. The words "tender mercies" were dealt with in 1:8. The word "compassions" designates the yearnings of pity or sympathy that the Philippians were to have for each other. With these graces present in their lives, they would live at peace with one another: quarrelings would cease, differences would be patched up, and estrangements would be healed. Are you a person of tender mercy and compassion in your relationship to fellow members of the body of Christ?

2 make full my joy,—Since Paul dearly loved and appreciated his brethren in Philippi, he felt great joy in them. See notes on 1:3-8. But now he wanted this joy made full or complete by any unity that was lacking in them.

that ye be of the same mind,—The Greek here literally means "think the same thing." The expression is a general one for concord or unity, and it is defined in the two clauses to follow.

having the same love,—Here the Philippians were exhorted to unity of *affection*. They were to love the same things (1:9,10) and to have the same love for one another and for the Lord.

being of one accord,—Here the Philippians were exhorted to unity of *sentiment*. The Greek word rendered as "accord" does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. It literally means "with united souls." The Philippians were to so think and act as if they were in reality but one soul.

of one mind;—This is a stronger form than the phrase "the same mind." Its literal meaning is "thinking the *one* thing," emphasizing the *oneness* of the union that should prevail in the Lord's church.

The unity of which Paul spoke in this passage is also the subject matter of the following passages: "Now the God of patience and comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God" (Romans 15:5-7); "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Cf. John 17:20,21.

Questions

Verse 25. Discuss Paul's confidence concerning abiding with the Philippians. How would his presence with them contribute to their progress and joy in the faith?

Verse 26. Discuss Christ as the sphere in which the faithful Christian's glorying abounds. How would Paul's presence with the Philippians contribute to their glorying in Christ?

Verse 27. Discuss the Christian's responsibility to so conduct himself that his manner of life will be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Why did Paul express some doubt concerning being with the Philippians again? What does the word "hear" signify? Discuss the significance and necessity of Christians standing fast in one spirit and striving with one soul for the faith of the gospel.

Verse 28. What does the word "affrighted" signify? What did the persecution of the Philippians signify to them and their adversaries? What is the significance of the phrase "and that from God"?

Verse 29. What is the meaning of the Greek word for "hath been granted"? Discuss the fact that both belief in Christ and suffering in His behalf are gifts of God's grace.

Verse 30. What was the "same conflict" that the Philippians "saw" and "heard" in Paul?

2:1. What is the import of the word "therefore"? What is signified by "exhortation in Christ," "consolation of love," "fellowship of the Spirit," and "tender mercies and compassions"?

Verse 2. How would the Philippians make full the joy of Paul? Discuss the unity expressed in the phrases "same mind," "same love," "one accord," and "one mind."

LESSON FIVE

2:3-11

3 doing nothing through faction or through vainglory,— The word “doing” in the text has been supplied in italics. The import of the Greek is simply “nothing.” The context of the passage indicates that “*thinking* nothing” is the sense of Paul’s exhortation, since both the previous and following exhortations relate to thinking or feeling rather than to doing. It is the thought or attitude that determines whether an action will be good or bad. Cf. Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:34,35. The phrase is thus best rendered as “thinking nothing in the way of faction or in the way of vainglory.”

The first thought or attitude that the Philippians were to abstain from was “faction”; that is, a partisan spirit, such as prevailed in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11,12; 3:1-4). This is the spirit of selfish ambition, self-seeking, and rivalry which always leads to party making. The factious man desires to win followers to himself rather than to Christ. He desires to build up his clique or party rather than to build up the body of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. The very essence of such a spirit is divisive rather than unitive in its tendency.

The next wrong thought or attitude that the Philippians were to abstain from was “vainglory.” This word is from the Greek *kenodoxian* (*kenodoxia*), appearing nowhere else in the New Testament (the kindred adjective, meaning “desirous of vainglory,” occurs only in Galatians 5:26). It is derived from *kenos*, “vain, empty,” and *doxa*, “glory.” Hence, the word can be defined as “empty pride or pomposity.” Many churches have been torn asunder by vainglorious elders, preachers, and other members who desired like Diotrophes to have the preeminence rather than to exalt Christ and to seek for the edification of their brethren. See 3 John 9.

but in lowliness of mind—This phrase expresses the opposite state of mind from those possessing a factious or vainglorious spirit. Augustus Neander wrote the following worthy comments: “The *direct* relation of this grace is to God alone; it is the sense of dependence of the creature on the Creator as such, and it places all created beings in this respect on the same footing. The man ‘lowly of mind’ as to his spiritual life is independent of men, and free from all slavish feeling, while sensible of his continual dependence on God. Still it indirectly affects his behavior toward his fellow-men; for, conscious of his entire dependence on God for his abilities, even as they are dependent on God for theirs, he will not pride himself on his abilities or exalt self in his conduct toward others (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12).”

each counting other better than himself;—This phrase in the

Greek literally signifies "esteeming each other superior to yourselves." The Christian who is of a lowly mind will not fix his eyes on those points in which he excels others, but will fix them on those in which others excel him. That is obviously the idea Paul has in mind, which is the true meaning of humility in the relationship of Christians to each other. Cf. Romans 12:10.

4 not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.—The word "looking" is from a Greek word which means "fixing the attention upon, with desire for or interest in." The *Expositor's Greek Testament* translates the verse: "No party having an eye for its own interests alone but also for the rest." Surely, Paul does not say that the Christian should not be concerned about his own welfare. Indeed, true self-interest is entirely in harmony with the will of God. But it is not to be confused with selfishness. The two are diametrically opposed to each other. The Christian who has a healthy concern for his own welfare, who is truly humble and unselfish, looks *not only* to his own things but *also* to the things of others. He recognizes that self-concern and concern for others are inextricably tied together. Cf. Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 13:5. Such a person willingly gives himself in the service of others, realizing that the greater blessedness of the Christian life is not in receiving but in giving (Acts 20:35).

5 Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:—The mind which Paul here exhorted the Philippian saints to have was the loving, self-denying humility that Jesus manifested in coming to the earth to serve mankind. He who has this same disposition will seek always to serve his fellow men, no matter how servile and self-abasing his service may be. Cf. John 13:3-17.

The next three verses deal specifically with the humility and self-abnegation of the Lord as shown in His incarnation. The New Testament offers no more profound thoughts than are contained in these verses. Indeed, many lengthy volumes have been written on the Lord's incarnation. Because of the limitation of space, we can only present some brief comments on this profoundest of profound subjects, but which, we trust, will help the reader to understand the basic truths concerning the redeeming mission of the Saviour to the world.

6 who, existing in the form of God,—The word "form" (Greek *morphe*) as here applied to God describes that mode in which the essential being of God expresses itself. Marvin R. Vincent has some excellent comments on this word. Among other things he says the following: "The word is used . . . to denote the expression of being which carries in itself the distinctive nature and character of being to whom it pertains, and is thus permanently identified with that nature and character. . . . This mode of expression, this *setting* of the divine

essence, is not *identical* with the essence itself, but *identified with it*, as its natural and appropriate expression, answering to it in every particular. It is the perfect expression of a perfect essence. It is not something imposed from without, but something which proceeds from the very depth of perfect being, and into which that being perfectly unfolds, as light from fire.

“To say, then, that Christ was *in the form of God*, is to say that He existed as essentially one with God. The expression of deity through human nature (ver. 7) thus has its background in the expression of deity *as deity* in the eternal ages of God’s being. Whatever the mode of this expression, it marked the being of Christ in the eternity before creation. As the *form* of God was identified with the *being* of God, so Christ, being in the form of God, was identified with the being, nature and personality of God.

“This *form*, not being *identical* with the divine essence, but dependent upon it, can be parted with or laid aside. Since Christ is one with God, and therefore pure being, absolute existence, He can exist without the form. This form of God Christ laid aside in His incarnation.”

The sum and substance of the matter is that since the outward expression which the word “form” speaks of, comes from and is truly representative of the essence of God, then it must follow that Jesus Christ as to His nature is God, absolute Deity Himself, a co-participant with the Father and the Holy Spirit in that divine essence which constitutes God.

counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped,—Before His incarnation, being in the form of God, Christ did not regard His equality with God a prize which was to be grasped and retained at all hazards; but, on the contrary, He laid aside the form of God and took upon Himself the form of a servant. Equality with God does not here mean the possession of the essence of Deity but the *expression* of that essence; although, as we previously noted, *possession* is implied by *expression*. The emphasis here is upon Christ’s *humiliation*. The fact of His equality with God is stated in the background in order to put the fact of His incarnation into stronger relief. Christ’s great object was to identify Himself with mankind, not to appear to men as divine but as human. If He had come to the world in the form of God, the world would have been amazed but not saved. That is what he did not grasp; but He rather counted the serving of mankind His prize, thus laying aside the form of His pre-earthly state and taking upon Himself the form of a servant.

7 but emptied himself,—Jesus divested Himself of that form of existence which was peculiar to Him as having the essence or nature of Deity. What he laid aside, then, in His incarnation was the form of God. But in so doing He did not divest Himself of His divine essence or nature. See Matthew 1:23. The change was a change of state: the form of God

into the form of a servant. His divine essence continued the same, being self-existent and immortal. Hence, His self-emptying was not self-extinction; His Deity was not change into a *mere* man. "In His humanity He retained the consciousness of deity, and in His incarnate state carried out the mind which animated Him before His incarnation. He was not *unable to assert* equality with God. He was able *not to assert it*" (Marvin R. Vincent).

taking the form of a servant,—The word "form" here is the same used with reference to God, and with the same sense. Recall that this word refers to the outward expression one gives of his inward being. As the "form of God" expresses the inmost reality of Christ as God, so the "form of a servant" expresses the inmost reality of Christ as a servant, that He became really and essentially the servant of men (Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:27). What Christ grasped at in His incarnation was not divine sovereignty and glory, but *service*. Thus in taking the "form of a servant," He assumed that mode of existence which answered to and was the complete expression of the servant's (Greek *doulos*, bondservant or slave) being.

being made in the likeness of men;—The Greek for "being made" literally means "becoming in," which signifies entrance into a new state. In taking the "form of a servant," the Lord entered into the state of the likeness of men. The word "likeness" in the Greek designates "that which is made like something else." So in His incarnate state the Lord's mode of manifestation or expression resembled what men are. Referring to the Lord's resemblance or likeness to men, Marvin R. Vincent wrote, "This leaves room for the assumption of another side of His nature—the divine—in the likeness of which He did not appear. As he appealed to men, He was like themselves, with a *real* likeness; but this likeness to men did not express His *whole* self. The *totality* could not appear to men, for that involved *the form of God* . . . Humanly He was like men, but regarded with reference to His whole self, He was not identical with man, . . . because there was an element of His personality which did not dwell in them—equality with God. Hence the statement of His human manifestation is necessarily limited to this fact, and is confined to *likeness* and does not extend to identity. 'To affirm likeness is at once to assert *similarity and to deny sameness*' (Dickinson)."

8 and being found in fashion as a man,—The word "fashion" designates that which is purely outward and appeals to the senses, referring to the human likeness of the Lord as it appealed to the sense of mankind. *Likeness* states the *fact of real resemblance* to men in mode of existence; *fashion* defines the outward *mode or form* as it appeared to men. As Heinrich Meyer observed, "The entire outwardly perceptible mode and form. Men saw in Christ a human form, bearing language, action, mode of life, wants and their satisfaction, in general, the state

and relations of a human being so that He was recognized as a man.”

The fact that Jesus appeared to others as a man during His earthly sojourn does not in any way contradict His affirmation in John 14:9, “. . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” In the body of Jesus others saw a man, but in His teaching, sinless character, and marvelous power they saw the Father.

he humbled himself,—The word “humbled” in the Greek means “to bring low.” This self-humbling is not the same as the self-emptying of verse 7. The latter refers to the emptying of the Lord of the form of God, whereas the former refers to the positive humiliation of Himself in taking the form of a servant and living in the likeness of men, which was culminated by His shameful death on the cross.

becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.—The meaning here is not that the Lord so humbled Himself as to become a cringing slave to death, the king of terrors (Job 18:40), but that His obedience to God went to the uttermost limit—as far as death, even the death of the cross. See Hebrews 10:9,10. The cross was indeed the climax of the Lord’s self-humiliation. He submitted Himself not just to death as such, but to the most shameful kind of death. A curse was uttered upon it by the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 21:23), and among the Romans it was reserved for malefactors and slaves. The preaching of the cross became a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him,—Paul now affirms that “wherefore”—that is, because of the Lord’s voluntary act of humility in emptying Himself of the form of God, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto the death of the cross—God has highly exalted (literally in the Greek, “exalted above”) Him. See Luke 24:26; John 17:5; Ephesians 4:10; Hebrews 12:2. Paul intimates here that if we would be exalted in the hereafter, we too must now humble ourselves after the Lord’s example of humility. See 2:3,5; 3:21; 1 Peter 5:5.

and gave unto him the name which is above every other name;—This expression has been variously explained. One explanation is that it refers to preeminently superior dignity, rank, and glory. This use is common in the Old Testament to describe Jehovah. That it can be the meaning here in describing the glorified Saviour, who has been highly exalted by the Father, is indicated by the use of the word “name” in Ephesians 1:21 and Hebrews 1:4. Another explanation is that it refers to a particular name given to Jesus, of which a number have been proposed such as Son of God, Lord, God, Christ Jesus. Or it may be that the name the apostle had in mind was the name Jesus itself, the name given to God’s only begotten Son at His humiliation (Matthew

1:21), but which even now in His glory is His name of honor (Acts 9:5). See 2:10.

Whichever of these explanations harmonizes with the meaning the apostle expressly had in mind, it is safe to conclude that each one of them harmonizes with what the Bible teaches elsewhere concerning the Lord. And the idea common to all of these explanations, which is certainly basic in the text, is that Jesus Christ, the glorified Redeemer of mankind, has been exalted to a position preeminently superior to both men and angels, and to all other things whether animate or inanimate.

10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow,—This verse and the one to follow refer to Isaiah 45:22-25, quoted also in Romans 14:11. The reference to bowing the knee not only describes a physical position of worship but also symbolizes the humility of those who render homage to Deity. It is not at the mention of but *in* the name of Jesus that this homage shall be rendered. This means that only in the exalted, glorified Saviour can be found the spiritual sphere, the holy element as it were, in which Deity can be given due honor. See Ephesians 5:20. Cf. Acts 4:12. To fail to prostrate oneself in the presence of God the Son is to fail to prostrate oneself in the presence of God the Father.

of things in heaven—The reference here is probably to the homage given Jesus by angels. See Ephesians 1:21; Hebrews 1:16; 1 Peter 3:22.

and things on earth—Men are here contemplated, among whom the Lord tabernacled for a while. Cf. Psalms 22:27.

and things under the earth,—Those who are dead shall also render homage to the Lord (Romans 14:9,11).

Some commentators believe that this reference to things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth pertains to the homage rendered Jesus by all created things, both animate and inanimate, answering to Romans 8:19-22; Psalms 65:13; 148.

11 and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,—The confession of the tongue that Jesus is Lord corresponds to the bowing of the knee. The tongue expresses that at which the knee bows. The emphasis here is on the word "Lord." This word is used in its proper sense as denoting ruler and sovereign. "Every tongue" can include even the demons, who acknowledge the fact of Jesus' Lordship, and also the unsaved, who eventually will also acknowledge this fact, although with shame. But only the tongues of those who look to Jesus for salvation confess Him as Lord in the fullest sense; for not only do they acknowledge the fact of His rulership, but also acknowledge Him as the one who has the supreme rulership and sovereignty over their lives. See Romans 10:9,10; 1 Corinthians 12:3.

to the glory of God the Father.—The confession of Jesus as Lord is meant to redound to the glory of the Father, who has elevated Jesus to this exalted state (2:9). See Acts 2:36.

Questions

Verse 3. What is the import of "doing nothing" in the Greek? Discuss the wrong attitude of faction and vainglory. Discuss the right attitude of lowliness of mind. How does the Christian count other better than himself?

Verse 4. Discuss the Christian's responsibility to look not only to his own things but also to the things of others.

Verse 5. What is the mind of Christ that every Christian should have?

Verse 6. What is signified by Christ existing in the form of God and counting not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped?

Verse 7. Of what did Jesus empty Himself in His incarnation? What is signified by the humiliation of Christ in taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men?

Verse 8. What is meant by the word "fashion" as applied to the Lord's earthly existence? What does the word "humbled" mean as applied in this verse to Christ? Discuss the humility of Christ as shown in His death on the cross.

Verse 9. Why did God exalt Christ? What lesson do we receive from this? Discuss the name given to Jesus which is above every other name.

Verse 10. What is meant by bowing the knee in the name of Jesus? What is the meaning of the statement, "of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth"? What is the significance of every tongue confessing Jesus as Lord? Why does confessing Jesus as Lord glorify God the Father?

LESSON SIX

2:12-18

12 So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed,— How do the words “so then” connect what the apostle was about to say with what he previously said? Evidently, by connecting the obedience of the Philippians with the humiliation of Christ. With the intimate, affectionate greeting “my beloved,” the apostle complimented the Philippians for their past obedience; and having referred them to the humiliation of Christ, he exhorted them to continue in obedience. As Joseph Lightfoot observed, “Having the example of Christ’s humiliation to guide you, of Christ’s exaltation to encourage you, as you have always been obedient, so continue.”

not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,—Without the encouragement Paul’s presence could give the Philippians, it was necessary that during his absence they should give more attention than ever to the obedience involved in working out their salvation. Cf. 2 Corinthians 13:10; Galatians 4:18.

work out your own salvation—The word “own” here emphasizes the personal responsibility each Christian has concerning his salvation, such a responsibility as no one else can assume for him. The expression “work out” literally means “complete; that is, carry out to the goal or completion.” Having already truly received salvation through the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Christian who obeys Paul’s command here will complete his salvation by a life of faith that expresses itself in submission to the Lord’s will. That is obviously what the apostle had in mind when he declared, “For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works . . .*” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The completion of salvation is the crucifying of the flesh with its passions and lusts (Galatians 5:24); it is following peace and sanctification, and looking diligently lest there be a falling short of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:14,15); it is giving the more diligence to make one’s calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10); it is cleansing oneself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1); it is putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:11,13); it is putting away the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24); it is putting on a heart of compassion, kindness, etc. (Colossians 3:12); above all, it is putting on love (Colossians 3:14). When any Christian strives to live such a life of submission to the divine will, his faith truly trusts in the Lord for freedom from sin and for the final gift of His grace in the eternal salvation of heaven. Cf. 1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 1:9; John 3:16. Thus for the Christian to

work out his own salvation is to guarantee that he will never fall from God's eternally saving grace.

with fear and trembling;—Cf. 2 Corinthians 7:15; Ephesians 6:5. In the working out of one's own salvation, Paul does not advocate slavish terror but wholesome, serious caution. Cf. 1 John 4:18. "This fear is self-distrust; it is tenderness of conscience; it is vigilance against temptation; it is the fear which inspiration opposes to high-mindedness in the admonition 'be not high-minded but fear.' It is taking heed lest we fall; it is a constant apprehension of the deceitfulness of the heart, and the insidiousness and power of inward corruption. It is the caution and circumspection which timidly shrinks from whatever would offend and dishonor God and the Saviour. And these the child of God will feel and experience the more he rises above the enfeebling, disheartening, distressing influence of the fear which hath torment" (Marvin R. Vincent, quoting Wardlaw "On Proverbs").

13 for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work,—The apostle now deals with divine enablement. The word "worketh" in the Greek means "to energize, to work effectually." Any Christian is doomed to failure in the completion of his salvation if he fails to rely on the enabling grace of God. In order for him to have the motivation and power to *work out* his own salvation, it is necessary for God to *work in* him. That is the import of the phrase "both to will and to work," literally meaning in the Greek "both the willing and the doing." Thus the Christian life is a life of dependence on the grace of God for its successful fruition. Through his study of the word of grace, the Christian receives from God the motivation or willingness to obey His will. And as he thus strives for a life of holiness, he relies on the grace of God to make such a life a reality so that he can successfully complete his salvation. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57,58; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:15; 8:1-2; 9:8; Philippians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17; 2 Timothy 2:1; 4:17,18; Titus 2:11,12; Ephesians 3:16-20; Hebrews 12:28; James 4:6,7; 1 Peter 1:5,9; 1 John 4:7-11,19; etc.

for his good pleasure.—God's working in the Christian is in order to carry out His sovereign and gracious purpose concerning him so that he can complete his salvation. See Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:10.

14 Do all things without murmurings and questionings:—The word "murmurings" is the translation of a Greek word which means "muttering, grumbling, the saying of anything in a low tone." This murmuring or grumbling of which the apostle spoke can be referred both to God and to fellow Christians. The fault which had been prevalent in ancient Israel (Exodus 16:7; Numbers 16:41; 1 Corinthians 10:10) could be directed by the Philippians against God because of what He imposed on them both to do and to suffer (1:29; 2:13-15). There was also the danger that they would murmur or grumble against each other,

contrary to the teaching of 2:2-8. See 6:41; 1 Peter 4:9; Jude 16.

The word "questionings" is the translation of a Greek word that can be rendered as "doubting," with the underlying meaning of suspicion. There was the danger that the Philippians would doubt or question the wisdom of God concerning His will for them and the suffering they would undergo because of their loyalty to Him. Cf. Job 1:22. Such doubtings or questionings could lead to intellectual rebellion against God. Furthermore, there was the danger that they would assume such a doubting, questioning, suspicious attitude toward each other, arising from the vainglory which is condemned in 2:3, that wranglings and disputings would arise to wreck spiritual havoc in their midst. See 1 Timothy 2:8; Galatians 5:15.

15 that ye may become blameless and harmless,—The apostle here ascribed the basic reason why the Philippians were to abstain from murmurings and questionings. The word "blameless" represents moral integrity as manifesting itself in the sight of others; and the word "harmless," from a Greek word signifying "unmixed, unadulterated, sincere, guileless," represents moral integrity as respects one's heart or inner being. Thus Paul's desire was that the Philippians would be upright both as to what was seen and unseen, both outwardly and inwardly.

children of God without blemish—The Philippians were already God's children when Paul wrote these words, which they became when they were baptized into Christ. See Galatians 3:26,27. But the wish the apostle expressed for them here was that they would be without blemish, being like their heavenly Father and thus becoming His children in the fullest, most acceptable sense. See 1 Peter 1:15,16; 2 Peter 1:4. In this connection we are reminded of the Lord's utterance in Matthew 5:9,44,45, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God . . . Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven."

The words "without blemish" originally referred to an animal sacrifice. They describe the victim in which the keen eye of the inspector has found no fault. Thus they are used to describe the Lamb of God in the whiteness of His spotless innocency (1 Peter 1:19). As they were used here by Paul, they are explanatory of "blameless and harmless"; the Philippians were to be unblemished or spotless both outwardly and inwardly, both in action and in attitude. See Colossians 1:22.

in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,—Peter used the word "crooked" in his indictment of the men of his own day (Acts 2:40), and to describe bad-tempered masters (1 Peter 2:18). In the Greek it has the idea of "wicked" in the sense of turning away from the truth. "Perverse" has the idea of "distorted, having a twist." It is a stronger word than "crooked." It is used in the Septuagint of Ecclesiastes 7:13 to denote those bodily deformed. It is used here as in Matthew

17:17 to denote a moral nature all warped and knotted, describing the extreme depravity of a generation that had turned away from the truth and was morally warped, knotted, and twisted. In such a society as this the Philippians were to maintain their moral integrity. They were to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. See John 15:19; Romans 12:2.

among whom ye are seen as lights in the world,—The word “lights” in the Greek literally means “luminaries.” It is the word used in the Septuagint of Genesis 1:14-16 to designate the heavenly bodies. Some commentators believe that the word is used metaphorically of torches by which wayfarers were lighted through the dark and tortuous streets of crowded and ill-built cities. Be that as it may, Paul’s use of the word here corresponds to the command of Jesus in Matthew 5:16, “Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

16 holding forth the word of life;—The image of light-bearers or luminaries is carried over here from the previous phrase. As they held forth (literally in the Greek, *present* or *offer*) the word of life, both by example and by teaching, the Philippians would be seen as light-bearers in the world. In so doing, they would point men to Him who is “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ,—The word “glory” here signifies “to take delight in.” At the second coming of Christ, the fidelity of the Philippians will be a source of great delight to Paul. See 4:1; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:19. “As good news of his converts’ fidelity was like a new lease of life to the worn apostle (1 Thessalonians 3:3), so his sweetest hope was to be able to stand before his Lord with his children at his side” (George Barlow).

that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain.—The athletic terms “run” and “labor” were familiar to Paul’s readers. In the work he had done to bring the Philippians to Christ and to encourage them to live in conformity to His will, it was as if the apostle had run a race, or labored as an athlete who strenuously prepares himself for a contest. But if the Philippians had failed to be loyal to Christ, thus to have fallen from grace, the apostle’s running and laboring on their behalf would have been in vain, tragically wasted effort.

17 Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith,—The words “I am offered” literally mean “I am poured out as a drink-offering.” The Greek word for “sacrifice” is used in the Septuagint to designate the sacrifices of the law of Moses. The word “service” is from a Greek word used of the religious service rendered by a priest. Paul here described the faith of the Philippians as the sacrifice and priestly service they rendered God, over which he would

most gladly pour out his blood in martyrdom as a drink-offering. See Exodus 29:40,41; 2 Timothy 4:6.

I joy,—Paul felt genuine personal joy that his dying would be a means of honoring the faith of the Philippians.

and rejoice with you all:—The rendering of Goodspeed, similar to that of other translators such as Moffatt and Knox, is the more evident sense the apostle had in mind: "and I congratulate you upon it"; that is, upon the honor occurring to you by my blood being poured on the sacrifice and service of your faith. If they already rejoiced, there was no need of the apostle urging them to joy in the verse to follow.

18 and in the same manner do ye also joy,—The prospect of the apostle's martyrdom was meant to bring to the Philippians the same joy that it did to him.

and rejoice with me.—Again the sense of "rejoice" is that of "congratulations." See Goodspeed, Moffatt, Knox, etc. As the apostle congratulated the Philippians on the honor that his martyrdom would bring to their faith, so they were also to congratulate him on the honor that such a death would bring to his faith. See 1:21.

Questions

Verse 12. What is the significance of the words "so then" and "much more in my absence"? Discuss the command, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Verse 13. Discuss the enabling grace of God that makes it possible for the Christian to complete his salvation. What is signified by the phrase "for his good pleasure"?

Verse 14. Discuss the murmurings and questionings that the Philippians were to abstain from.

Verse 15. Discuss the basic reason Paul ascribed why the Philippians were to abstain from murmurings and questionings. How could the Philippians become children of God with blemish? What is the significance of the phrase "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation"? Discuss Paul's use of the word "lights" as corresponding to the command of Jesus in Matthew 5:16.

Verse 16. How would the Philippians hold forth the word of life? Discuss Paul's hope that he would have whereof to glory in the day of Christ and that his running and laboring would not have been in vain.

Verse 17. If Paul were to suffer martyrdom, how could this be considered as an offering upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith? Why would Paul feel joy at such a prospect? What is the meaning of the phrase "rejoice with you all"?

Verse 18. Why was the prospect of Paul's martyrdom to bring joy to the Philippians? What is the significance of the phrase "rejoice with me"?

LESSON SEVEN

2:19-27

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

—All that Paul said or thought was essentially focused on Christ. He was himself in Christ, he labored in Christ, he yearned for the Philippians in the tender mercies of Christ; and so he hoped in Christ to send Timothy unto them. He hoped that with the approval of Christ, and under His ordering, he would be able to send his beloved son in the gospel to know how they were faring. We have already seen from our study of this epistle that the apostle was solicitous of the spiritual state of the Philippians. He now expressed confidence that the report he would receive from Timothy would be good, for he sent him that he, Paul the prisoner, might be of good comfort when he learned of their progress in the gospel. Being a true, loving minister of Christ, the apostle could never forget those with whom he had labored, whether present with them or absent; and his principal concern was that they were growing in grace and the Christian life.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state.—The Greek word for “likeminded” is *isopsuchon*

(*isopsuchos*), occurring only here in the New Testament. It literally means “like-souled.” Cf. Deuteronomy 13:6; Psalms 55:14; Acts 4:32. The apostle had in mind Timothy’s soul likeness to himself in his care for the spiritual state of the Philippians. And no one else among the saints in Rome had this same tender feeling for the Philippians. As Chrysostom observed, “Had he none likeminded of those that were with him? Not one. And what means this? No one who has yearnings and takes thought for you as I do. No one will lightly choose, he means, to make so long a journey for you. For I might have sent others, but there was no one like him. This, then is that likemindedness, to love the disciples as the master loves them.”

The care Timothy had for the Philippians is designated by the word “truly,” from the Greek adverb *gneos*, occurring only here in the New Testament, literally meaning “genuinely, sincerely” (the kindred adjective occurs in 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 Corinthians 8:8). Timothy’s concern for the spiritual welfare of the Philippians was real, genuine, sincere. Thus any overt concern he would show for them would not be of necessity or grudging, but of a willing, sympathetic, and loving heart. Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7.

21 For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ.

—The Greek word for “all” is emphatic, meaning “one and all, without exception.” This passage is difficult to interpret. If Paul meant that

none of the saints at Rome sought the things of Christ in any sense at all, he certainly contradicted what he said in 1:14-16. It is hard to believe that he included in his indictment those who were closely associated with him in Rome, such as Epaphras, Mark, and Justus. It could well have been that all the faithful evangelists associated with him during his imprisonment, with the exception of Timothy, were away from Rome when this portion of the epistle was being written, and thus were not included in the indictment. Some commentators believe that the indictment is only spoken of in comparison with Timothy; that is, even the best of those who preached the gospel in Rome did not care for the things of Christ to the degree that they would be willing as Timothy to make the necessary self-sacrifice in going to Philippi.

But the fact is that whoever Paul included in "the one and all" of the church in Rome were severely and pointedly indicted by him. In seeking their own rather than the things of Christ, they were opposed to the precepts the apostle had plainly laid down: "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good . . . even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:24,33). See 2:4 and 1 Corinthians 13:5.

Those who seek the things of Christ imitate His example by seeking the good of others whatever the cost may be. See 2:4,5 and Matthew 25:34-40 in connection with Matthew 20:28. They are willing to forego any personal comfort and gain in order to lead souls to Christ. There can be no question at all that both Paul and Timothy well exemplified this Christlike spirit of self-sacrifice. Do you exemplify this same spirit? It is a sad commentary on the attitude of any one who claims to be a Christian that he will only serve the Lord when little expense, effort, and trouble are involved. How unchristian is the attitude of some in the church who are willing to be faithful to the Lord only in the least demanding things of the divine word! Such passages as Matthew 16:24,25 and Luke 14:33 are utterly meaningless to them.

22 But ye know the proof of him,—The word "proof" refers to that which has met the test, such as metal that has been tested in a crucible and approved as genuine, the real thing. Timothy's faith in and love for the Lord had been put to the test in the crucible of Christian service, and had been amply proved to be real and genuine. The Philippians knew first hand of Timothy's tried proof. He was one of Paul's companions in the journey in which he first visited Philippi (Acts 16:1,3, 12; 17:14) and when he again passed through Macedonia (2 Corinthians 1:1; 2:13; 9:2,4).

that, as a child serveth a father,—The literal rendering of the Greek is "as a child *with* a father," the sense being that of a child working with his father. Since Timothy was Paul's child in the faith (1 Corinthians

4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2), Paul was Timothy's father in the faith. However, the apostle did not speak of Timothy serving him but of serving *with* him, as for some desirable goal a father and son may be seen at work together.

so he serveth with me in furtherance of the gospel.—Being a dutiful son, Timothy diligently served with his father in the faith in the great work of furthering or propagating the gospel. In this passage Paul did not mean to imply that Timothy had rendered no service *to* him. Indeed, all Christians are to humbly serve one another (1 Peter 5:5). But they must also work *with* each other, serving together to accomplish the Lord's work. See Romans 16:21; Colossians 4:11. Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:1. It is only as Christians have this cooperative spirit that they will unselfishly join hands to use their various abilities in furtherance of the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me:—The significance of the word "see" is that of certainty. Thus the apostle stated that as soon as he was certain what the outcome would be with himself, whether he would be sentenced to death or acquitted, he would immediately send Timothy to the Philippians. But until his own fate was definitely determined he seemed desirous of keeping Timothy with him, the reason for which he did not reveal.

24 but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly.—In the preceding verse Paul expressed uncertainty as to what the outcome would be, and in 2:17 he expressed willingness to die, if necessary, as an offering upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith. But now he expressed trust in the Lord that the sentence would not go against him, but that for the sake of the Philippians he would be spared to come to comfort and strengthen them. His confidence here in no way contradicted any uncertainty he previously expressed. Paul's trust in the Lord to come to Philippi was the recognition that if such should happen it would have to be according to the Lord's will, not on his own say so. As James 4:13-15 expresses it, "Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that."

25 But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, The person designated here is mentioned only in this epistle. His name was derived from Aphrodite (Venus), the Greek goddess of love, literally meaning "charming." How well this name befitted the one wearing it, for Epaphroditus was indeed a spiritually charming person who possessed

a great compassion for his fellow Christians and a great zeal for the work of Christ (2:26,30)!

The word "send" in the context literally refers to the sending *back* of Epaphroditus to the Philippians (2:25; 4:18). But as he had come intending to stay for some while with the apostle, the latter used the word "send" (cf. 2:30).

my brother—Epaphroditus was Paul's brother in the gospel, a brother Christian. Paul used the term affectionately to describe the relationship of himself to Epaphroditus in the family of God, but he did not use it as a religious title. Cf. 2 Peter 3:15. In fact, nowhere in the New Testament is the term used as any kind of title, whether to designate a preacher of the gospel or an older Christian in lieu of the title "Mr." Each male member of the body of Christ, whether young or old, minister of the gospel or worker for the Lord in any other capacity, is the brother of every other member; and the only way the term can be used scripturally is to describe this relationship in the family of God.

and fellow-worker—Here Epaphroditus is referred to as being engaged in the same work as Paul, that of the gospel ministry. It is not impossible that he had been one of Paul's co-workers in Philippi; and, health permitting, he had unquestionably labored with the apostle in Rome.

and fellow-soldier,—This is what Epaphroditus was to Paul in the good fight of faith. "Paul regarded himself as enlisted to make war on all the spiritual enemies of the Redeemer, and he esteemed Epaphroditus as one who had shown that he was worthy to be engaged in so good a cause" (Albert Barnes). Indeed, all other Christians are compared with soldiers because of the nature of the Christian life (1:27,28; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3,4; 4:7; Philemon 2), which involves a constant battle against the forces of evil (Ephesians 6:10-18).

and your messenger—The Greek word for "messenger" is *apostolon* (*apostolos*), meaning "one sent with a commission." It is the same word rendered as "apostle" in the sense of the Twelve and Paul. Those so commissioned by Christ had to be witnesses of His resurrection (Acts 1:22). Cf. 1 John 1:1-3. Epaphroditus was an apostle only in the sense that he was sent with a commission, with special orders and authority, by the church in Philippi to Paul. Barnabas, Andronicus, Junias, Titus, and certain unnamed brethren were also apostles: "But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it . . ." (Acts 14:14); "Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles . . ." (Romans 16:17); "Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker to you-ward, or our brethren, they are the messengers (*apostoloi*) of the churches . . ." (2 Corinthians 8:23). See Acts 13:1-3; 14:26.

and minister to my need;—Epaphroditus was commissioned to minister to Paul's need, primarily to convey the contribution of the Philippian church (4:18), but also to do whatever else would be of help to the imprisoned apostle (2:30).

The commendation given in this passage of Epaphroditus indicates Paul's high estimate of this truly spiritual person—a brother Christian, a colleague in toil for the Master, a fellow-soldier in danger and conflict, a trusted messenger of the Philippian church, a faithful minister to the apostle's need. "Brother work-mate, comrade-in-arms, church-messenger, and serving man. What a designation! Paul thinks him worthy of all honour ((ver. 29) that the church can give, and he himself immortalizes him by this unusual estimate of his personal character and work" (George Barlow).

26 since he longed after you all,—Paul felt great sympathy concerning Epaphroditus' desire to see his beloved brethren in Philippi and to relieve their concern in regard to his safety, and thus he deemed it necessary to send him back to them.

and was sore troubled, because ye had heard that he was sick:—The words "sore troubled" are the same used to describe the Lord's mental state in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37). The Greek literally expresses being worn out and overpowered with heavy grief. Grimm suggests the meaning in the context here "of the uncomfortable feeling of one who is not at home." If this is correct, it is indeed a lovely, winsome picture the apostle portrayed: as his strength returned, the convalescent Epaphroditus, far from home, felt great pangs of homesickness and eagerly desired to return to Philippi to dispel the pain and sorrow of those who were disquieted by tidings of his critical illness.

27 for indeed he was sick nigh unto death:—Epaphroditus' illness was so critical that it almost proved fatal. Such an illness may have been brought on by the risks and exposure of his journey from Philippi to Rome, but there is no definite evidence of this.

but God had mercy on him;—The account of the sickness and recovery of Epaphroditus is such as to lead us to the conclusion that he was not healed by a miracle but by the ordinary providence of God; that is, by divine power working through natural means. This proves that those who had the gift of healing in the early church could not exert it on all who were sick, not even on some whom they would be most naturally desirous of healing, but that such miraculous power depended on the will of God for any particular occasion.

and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow.—The providence of God that made possible the healing of Epaphroditus was not only an act of mercy extended to him

but also to Paul. The apostle was caused great sorrow by Epaphroditus' illness, which would have been even more intense had his friend died—sorrow upon sorrow. But God alleviated this sorrow in the healing mercy given Epaphroditus.

Questions

Verse 19. Why did Paul hope to send Timothy shortly to the Philippians?

Verse 20. Discuss Timothy's likemindedness to Paul in the genuine care he had for the Philippians' state.

Verse 21. Discuss the attitude of those who "seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ" in contrast to that of those who truly seek the things of Christ.

Verse 22. What is the import of the word "proof" as it is applied to Timothy? What is the import of Timothy serving *with* Paul, "as a child serveth a father," in furtherance of the gospel?

Verse 23. When did Paul hope to send Timothy to the Philippians?

Verse 24. Discuss Paul's "trust in the Lord" that he would soon come to Philippi.

Verse 25. What is the meaning of the name Epaphroditus? Why do we know that this name truly befitted the one wearing it? What is the meaning of the word "send" in the context? What is the import of the apostle's reference to Epaphroditus as "my brother," "fellow-worker," "fellow-soldier," "your messenger," and "minister to my need"?

Verse 26. Why did Paul want to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians?

Verse 27. How sick had Epaphroditus been? Discuss the effect of God's mercy on him and also on Paul.

LESSON EIGHT

2:28-30; 3:1-4

28 I have sent him therefore the more diligently,—The phrase “the more diligently” is rendered by Joseph Lightfoot as “with increased eagerness.” In view of Epaphroditus’ recovery from his sickness and its happy consequences, Paul was motivated by even greater eagerness in sending him to Philippi. This is indicative of the apostle’s genuine spirit of unselfishness. Personally, he would rather have had his charming friend stay with him, but he gave up this pleasure for the benefit of others. How great a sacrifice it must have been for the apostle to relinquish the company of so worthy a man we cannot realize; but “he who gives up is worthy of the friend he gives, for neither of them is consulting his own wishes.” Indeed, “love seeketh not its own” (1 Corinthians 13:5). What a striking contrast to the self-seeking spirit of the world!

that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.—Epaphroditus’ coming to Philippi would be an occasion of great rejoicing to the saints there when they saw him safe and sound, recovered from the sickness that had almost been fatal. And the apostle’s anticipation of their rejoicing lightened the load of his own sorrow at the personal loss he felt regarding his beloved friend. “A prior sorrow will still remain,” observed Joseph Lightfoot; “but if he cannot go so far as to say he will rejoice, the alleviation of the loss of such a friend’s society is the fact that they have him again.”

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy;—The Philippians were to rejoice in receiving Epaphroditus “in the Lord,” recognizing that his presence with them would be a gift of the Lord, made possible by His grace and mercy. After all, one of the finest gifts anyone can receive from the bountiful munificence of the Lord is a friend restored to him after a long absence. We must ever gratefully remember that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (James 1:17).

and hold such in honor:—The Philippians were to recognize the value of such a wonderful saint as Epaphroditus and thus to render him the honor he was justly due, to “grapple him to their souls with hoops of steel.”

It is true, of course, that no one deserves the honor that must be rendered to God alone, but there is indeed a kind of honor that we can render men. “Render to all their dues: . . . honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:7). The faithful Christian willingly follows this injunction in rendering honor to whomever it belongs. He honors his father and mother (Ephesians 6:2). Cf. Hebrews 12:9. He renders “double honor”

to the elders that "rule well . . . especially those who labor in the word and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17). He honors his spouse (1 Peter 3:1-7). He honors those over him in the political realm (1 Peter 2:17). He honors all men, who are of infinite, inherent worth because they are made in the image of God (1 Peter 2:17). See 1 Timothy 6:1. And he renders a special kind of honor to all such Christians as Epaphroditus who courageously, faithfully, and lovingly serve the Lord.

30 because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death,—This passage explains why the Philippians were to hold Epaphroditus in honor. He was such a great, devoted Christian that the sacrifices he made on behalf of Christ almost resulted in his death. "What noble self-oblivion he manifests! He thinks more of the cause dear to his heart than of his own comfort or even life." His self-sacrificing devotion to the Lord and His work reminds us of Paul's message of faith to the Ephesian elders: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22-24).

hazarding his life—These words vividly portray the extremity of Epaphroditus' self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of Christ. The word "hazarding" is translated from the Greek *parabouleusamenos* (*paraboleuomai*), meaning "to venture, to expose oneself." It was also a gambler's word, "to throw down a stake." Thus Paul declared that Epaphroditus risked his life in making the trip from Philippi to Rome. It may be that he was in a delicate state of health when he set out from Philippi, putting his life in jeopardy as he faced the hardships of the journey before him. In Rome there was the risk of contracting malaria fever and other dangerous diseases. Then, too, the long hours he spent in attending to the needs of Paul may have contributed to the breaking down of his health. But at all hazards, literally gambling with his life, he undertook this ministry of Christian love, which cost him a serious illness. Humanly speaking, what he did for the sake of Christ was a foolish thing. It reminds us of Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 4:10, "We are fools for Christ's sake."

It is interesting to note that those of the primitive church who cared for the sick at the risk of their lives were called *parabolani*, a form of the word rendered as "hazarding" in this passage, literally meaning "reckless persons." And that is exactly what Epaphroditus was in the eyes of men: a reckless person, risking his life in the work he undertook. And it is certainly axiomatic that the entire Christian life involves risk taking. He who is not willing to be faithful unto death, putting his life on the line for Christ, will never receive the crown of life. See Revelation 2:10.

to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.—This is the specific work Paul had in mind concerning Epaphroditus' risking of his life in coming to Rome. The apostle did not imply any neglect on the Philippians' part. Indeed, what he said here is complimentary and affectionate, to the effect that all that was lacking in their service was their ministration to him in *person*, which was supplied by Epaphroditus.

3:1 Finally,—In the Greek, literally “as to the rest.” This is the frequent introduction to the conclusion of Paul's letters. See 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:1. It would seem that the apostle had intended to bring his letter to a close, but something of which we have no information caused him to warn his readers of the Judaizers and their attempts to undermine his influence. He resumed his farewell in 4:8, but even lingered there.

my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.—Saluting the Philippians as his spiritual brothers, the apostle exhorted them to rejoice because of their highly privileged position of being in the Lord, of having Him as their Redeemer and Intercessor, the source of all their spiritual blessings. See John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:7; 3:8; Hebrews 4:14-16. “In the Lord” marks the true ground for rejoicing in contrast with “having confidence in the flesh” (verse 3).

To write the same things to you,—The reference here may be to rejoicing, which is the principal theme of the epistle (1:18,25; 2:2,17, 18, 28; 4:4). It is more probable, however, that the apostle referred to the various exhortations he had given the Philippians when he was with them or that he had previously written them, especially his exhortation to beware of the Judaizers and their false teaching, which he was repeating in this epistle.

to me indeed is not irksome,—Paul desired to dispel from his readers' minds any thought they might have had that it was burdensome or oppressive for him to repeat the things he had said to them before. “They might suppose that in the multitude of cares which he had, and in trials in Rome, it might be too great a burden for him to bestow so much attention on their interests” (Albert Barnes). The loving apostle always counted it a privilege, not a burden, to say anything to his fellow saints that would contribute to their spiritual welfare.

but for you it is safe.—Whatever Paul repeated in this epistle that he had previously said to the Philippians was for their good, to keep them faithful to the Lord so that they would rejoice in Him no matter what difficulties beset them. Cf. Hebrews 3:13.

2 Beware—The Greek literally means “look to,” or, as we would say, “watch out for.” Three times in the verse the apostle used the word to

warn his readers to watch out for certain ones whose false teaching and evil lives posed a threat to their spiritual security.

of the dogs,—Commentators in general, as the context indicates, expressly apply the word “dogs” to the Judaizers. Marvin R. Vincent has aptly described these false teachers who were such a thorn in the flesh to the early church: “Rev., correctly, *the dogs*, referring to a well-known party, the Judaizers. These were nominally Christians who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but as the Saviour of Israel only. They insisted that Christ’s kingdom could be entered only through the gates of Judaism. Only circumcised converts were fully accepted by God. They appeared quite early in the history of the Church, and are those referred to in Acts 15:1. Paul was the object of their special hatred and abuse. They challenged his birth, his authority, and his motives. ‘Paul must be destroyed,’ was as truly their watchword as the cry for the destruction of Carthage had been of old to the Roman senator. . . . These are referred to in ch. 1:16; and the whole passage in the present chapter, from verse 3 to verse 11, is worthy of study, being full of incidental hints lurking in single words, and not always apparent in our versions; hints which, while they illustrate the main point of the discussion, are also aimed at the assertions of the Judaizers. *Dogs* was a term of reproach among both Greeks and Jews. Homer uses it of both women and men, implying shamefulness in the one, and recklessness in the other. Thus Helen: ‘Brother-in-law of me, a mischief-devising dog’ (*Iliad* 6:344). Teucer of Hector: ‘I cannot hit this raging dog’ (*Iliad* 8:298).”

Dogs and Judaizers had this in common— that they tore flesh. The savage delight that the latter took in inflicting a wound is shown in Galatians 6:13.

beware of the evil workers,—The apostle doubtless referred here to the same persons whom he had characterized as “dogs,” the Judaizers. These false teachers ostensibly “worked” for the gospel, but in reality they worked for evil in denying the all-sufficient saving power of the gospel for all men and in their attacks on such faithful servants of the Lord as Paul.

beware of the concision:—This is another expression referring to the Judaizers. The Greek word for “concision” is *katatomen* (*katatome*), appearing only here in the New Testament, meaning “mutilation.” The verb form occurs only in the Septuagint, of mutilations forbidden by the law of Moses (Leviticus 21:5). The noun is used here as a play on *peritome*, circumcision, a word which the Judaizers took great pride in. Paul changed the prefix, and stigmatized them as “the mutilation party,” not of the true circumcision of which the apostle spoke in the next verse. Joseph Lightfoot illustrates this toying with words in the complaint of an ambassador that he had been sent, not to Spain, but to Pain.

3 for we are the circumcision,—This was the abstract term for

those who were circumcised. In the Old Testament, circumcision was a symbol of purity (Leviticus 26:41; Deuteronomy 10:16). The Judaizers felt that they were the only pure followers of Christ, thus acceptable to God, because they had been circumcised. But Paul, having designated their circumcision as being in reality a mutilation, insists that those who do not depend on any such cutting of the flesh, but solely on Christ, are the true circumcision and thus are truly pure in the sight of God. This figurative use of the word "circumcision" to designate all faithful followers of Christ is also found in the following passages: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28,29); "In whom [Christ] ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11).

who worship by the Spirit of God,—The word "worship" is the translation of a Greek word (*latreuontes*) which is used in Acts 26:7 to designate the service rendered God by His peculiar people, the Jews, under the Old Testament. A Jew would be scandalized by the application of this word to Christian worship or service. In Romans 12:1 it is used by Paul to embrace the whole life of the Christian: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service (*latreian*)." Cf. Hebrews 13:16. This worship or service the Christian renders God is "by the Spirit" in that it is made possible both by the *revelation* and *presence* of the Spirit. The sum total of the service the Christian renders God must be in conformity with the revelation of the Spirit in the word of Christ, the New Testament. But it must also be sanctified by the presence of the Spirit in order for it to be acceptable to God. Cf. Romans 8:3,9; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Ephesians 3:16-21; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:13,14; 1 John 3:24.

and glory in Christ Jesus,—Those of the true circumcision exult or glory not in themselves but in Him who is their Redeemer, Saviour, and Intercessor, who made possible their relationship to Him as "a people for his own possession" (Titus 2:14). See 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17.

and have no confidence in the flesh;—The word "confidence" contains the idea of "coming to a settled persuasion regarding something." The implication here is that the Judaizers had come to a settled persuasion regarding the flesh, taking great pride in the fact that they were of the fleshly lineage of Abraham (cf. Matthew 3:9) and had been circumcised in the flesh. But Paul disclaimed such a thing in regard to himself and other faithful Jewish converts to the gospel. Their confidence was not in their Jewish background, but in their relation to Christ, as being in Him and having His Spirit.

4 though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more:—Here the apostle used the argument ad hominem. He argued that if any one with a Jewish background had the right to have confidence in the flesh he had it to a greater degree than any other; but that since he disclaimed all such confidence (verses 3,7), every Judaizer was bound to do the same. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:22,23. In the next two verses he elaborated upon the superiority over others of his Jewish background, which we shall consider in the lesson to follow.

Questions

Verse 28. Discuss the unselfishness of Paul that caused him to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians the more diligently. Why would Epaphroditus' coming to Philippi be an occasion of great joy to the saints there?

Verse 29. What is the import of Paul's command to the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with all joy "in the Lord"? Discuss the honor we can render certain men, such as was to be rendered Epaphroditus by the Philippians.

Verse 30. Discuss thoroughly why the Philippians were to hold Epaphroditus in honor.

3:1. What is the import of the word "finally"? Why were the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord? What were "the same things" that Paul wrote to the Philippians? Why did Paul inform his readers that it was not irksome for him to write these things? What is the significance of the phrase "for you it is safe"?

Verse 2. What is the significance of the word "beware"? Who were the "dogs" and "evil workers"? Discuss Paul's play on the word "circumcision" in his reference to the concision.

Verse 3. Discuss Paul's portrayal of Christians as the true circumcision.

Verse 4. Discuss Paul's use of the argument ad hominem in his reference to "confidence in the flesh."

LESSON NINE

3:5-12

5 circumcised the eighth day,—In describing the strictness of his life under Judaism, the confidence he might have claimed in the flesh, the apostle began with his circumcision, which was enjoined by the law of Moses as a necessary condition of Jewish nationality, made binding as a parental responsibility for every male child (Leviticus 12:3; Luke 1:59). The fact that he was circumcised on the eighth day in strict conformity to the law shows that he was neither of heathen nor of Ishmaelite background, but that he was born of law-observing Jewish parents. Converts to Judaism were circumcised in maturity; Ishmaelites in their thirteenth year.

of the stock of Israel,—Again the apostle emphasized his Jewish background, distinguishing himself from the Edomites and other non-Jews who practiced circumcision. He was not a proselyte, not grafted into the covenant people, but of the original *stock* (Greek *genous*, race). He was a descendent of the patriarch Israel, or Jacob, not an Idumaeen nor an Ishmaelite; and he was therefore able to trace his genealogy back as far as any other Jew could. Cf. Romans 9:3,4; 11:1.

of the tribe of Benjamin,—Paul was not of one of the tribes which apostatized in the time of Rehoboam from the house of David, but of Benjamin, which alone continued true to the tribe of Judah. Benjamin only of the twelve patriarchs was born in the land of promise. Mordecai, the deliverer of the Jews from Haman, was a Benjamite. Paul's original name *Saul* was probably derived from Saul the son of Kish, the Benjamite. If any person had the right to take pride in his Jewish heritage, Paul certainly had that right in being a member of such a loyal and prominent tribe as Benjamin.

a Hebrew of Hebrews;—This rendering gives a wrong coloring to the original language, as if the apostle were claiming to be preeminently a Hebrew among other Hebrews. He means a Hebrew *from* (Greek *ex*) Hebrew parents. "The expression implies characteristics of language and manners. He might be an Israelite and yet a child of Greek-speaking Jews: but his parents had retained their native tongue and customs, and he himself, while understanding and speaking Greek, also spoke in Hebrew on occasion. See Acts 21:40; 22:2" (Marvin R. Vincent). See 2 Corinthians 11:22.

as touching the law, a Pharisee;—As to legal status and strictness, Paul was a member of what he called "the strictest sect of our religion" (Acts 26:5). Cf. Matthew 23:3. However, in their excessive strictness for adherence to legal righteousness, the Pharisees had formulated more

detailed rules of conduct than were actually revealed in the law, which they considered as binding as the law itself. See Matthew 15:1-9.

6 as touching zeal, persecuting the church;—Paul had not only been a follower of Judaism but a most zealous one in persecuting that which he believed taught things contrary to the law. See Acts 22:3; 26:9; Galatians 1:13, 14.

as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.—If Paul here means that he kept the law perfectly, never transgressing it in any instance, he plainly contradicts his observation concerning all men: “. . . for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:9,10,23). See Romans 3:19,20; Galatians 3:10,11. Cf. 3:12. The evident meaning of the apostle is that his adherence to the law was so strict that in the eyes of men he was held blameless, even though his transgressions of it reckoned him to be a sinner in the eyes of God. In his essential adherence to both the ceremonial and moral requirements of the law, the apostle had been as faithful a Jew as could be found anywhere, being recognized by all who knew him for the strictness of his fidelity to the law. Only in that sense could he consider himself as blameless.

7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.—The full significance of this rendering cannot be apprehended, for the word “gain” in the Greek is plural “gains,” while the word “loss” is singular. Joseph Lightfoot suggests that it is as if Paul said, “All such things which I used to count up as distinct items with a miserly greed, and reckoned to my credit, those have I massed together, under one general head as loss.” But it may be asked, “All this is very well as regards his circumcision, his Israelite ancestry, his Hebrew parentage, his membership in the tribe of Benjamin, his Pharisaism, but can he possibly have considered his morality as ‘loss’?” Most definitely, if he had made it a matter of inward pride and outward boasting, or of dependence on it for salvation. Such an attitude would have kept him from coming to Christ, the sinner’s only means of salvation, so that what was good in itself, and which the Lord actually commended in the rich young ruler, would have become to him a stumbling block. Indeed, no matter how moral a person’s life may be, it can never remove the guilt of a single sin he has committed. Only the blood of Christ can take away sins and reckon a person as justified or righteous before God (Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9).

The perfect tense “have counted” denotes an action the result of which continues. After mature and careful consideration the apostle had come to a settled conviction concerning the matter of which he wrote here. In receiving Christ as his Saviour, he counted his Judaism, with all its

advantages, well lost. “. . . having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:46).

8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss—The words “yea verily” show the force and certainty of Paul’s conviction. He now used the present tense “I count,” which shows continuous action in present time. He had come to a settled conviction with reference to those things which he called gains. And now he affirmed that he still held to this conviction, that it was a continuous state of mind.

Not only did he count loss all things associated with his Jewish heritage and background (verse 7), but also all other things that could come between him and his Lord, such as material possessions, the esteem of his fellow Jews, family acceptance, etc. He used here the same word for loss, *zemia* (*zemia*), as he did in Acts 27:21, where he referred to the loss sustained by departing from Crete, contrary to his advice, on the voyage to Rome.

for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:—The literal sense of the Greek here is “on account of the surpassing excellency (the super-eminence above them all) of the knowledge of Christ.” Those things which can be known of Christ—His attitude, His will, His example, His presence—were to the apostle of surpassing excellency in comparison with everything else.

for whom I suffered the loss of all things,—Not only did Paul “count” or consider all things as loss for the knowledge of Christ, but here he emphasized that he actually lost them. When Paul embraced Christianity he did in fact give up everything that stood between him and Christ.

and do count them but refuse,—The derivation of the Greek word for “refuse” is uncertain. It can either refer to *excrement* or to *what is thrown away from tables, leavings or garbage*. So infinitely important was Christ to Paul that he considered everything he gave up for Him as so worthless as to be considered excrement or garbage.

that I may gain Christ,—Paul not only suffered the loss of all things to gain Christ as his Saviour, but also to appropriate Him in his life so that he could become full or complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Cf. Colossians 2:6,7.

9 and be found in him,—The Greek for “be found” signifies “discovered or proved to be.” Paul wanted it to be discovered by others that he was in Christ, such as would be proved by a life that essentially conformed to the holiness of Christ. Cf. Goodspeed’s rendering, “be known to be united to him.”

not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteous-

ness which is from God by faith:—The righteousness contemplated here, as the context indicates (verses 12-16), is not expressly that which is synonymous with justification but rather holiness of character, although the latter necessarily implies the former since one cannot have the Lord's imparted righteousness unless first he has His imputed righteousness. The righteousness referred to by the apostle is the kind that can be discovered or seen by men, the objective goodness of a Christlike life, such as reflects the light of Christ and thus glorifies God. Paul could not call this righteousness his own because it was a gift of God's grace through his vital union with Christ. Since the power for Paul's fruit bearing to the glory of God was not in himself as a branch but in Christ as the vine (John 15:4,5), the apostle could not possibly have designated such fruit bearing or righteousness as his own.

10 that I may know him,—Paul connected his desire expressed in the preceding verse with his desire to *know* Christ; not mere intellectual recognition, but communion, fellowship, appropriation; not mere historical acquaintanceship with facts and figures, but a living intimacy with the living Christ. There are those who know *about* Christ and His will, but who do not know Him experientially in the realization of His real presence in their lives as their most intimate and best of all friends and companions. They do not know the spiritual power, joy, and comfort that come from personal, intimate, trusting, loving fellowship with the living Christ.

and the power of his resurrection,—This power which Paul desired is not the power that brought about the Lord's resurrection, but the power His risen life gives to those who truly know Him so that they can live fruitful and victorious lives to the glory of God. See 1:21; 4:13; Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 2:14.

and the fellowship of his sufferings,—Paul also expressed his desire to have the fellowship of the Lord's suffering; that is, to share or jointly-participate in His sufferings. As Jesus suffered for righteousness' sake while on the earth, all who truly know Him, to walk with Him and follow His example, will also suffer for righteousness' sake. See 1:29; Matthew 5:10; 10:22-25; Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 2:20-23; 3:14-17. Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Peter 4:12-16.

becoming conformed unto his death;—Paul's desire was that he so might come to know Christ, to have the power of His resurrection working in his own life, to jointly participate in His suffering, that he would become like his Lord with respect to His death, not only His physical death which was for others, but also His death to self, beautifully illustrated in His self-emptying (2:7), a self-emptying that not only was manifested in His death on the cross but also in His entire earthly life of denying self in order to serve others. The most radical conformity is

indicated here. Paul was not only willing to die in the service of others, conforming to Christ's physical death; but he also desired to conform to the spirit and temper, the meekness and submissiveness of Christ; to His unselfish love and devotion in all phases of serving others.

11 if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.—The apostle here gave the reason why he desired the things expressed in verses 8, 9, and 10. The words "may attain" contain in the Greek the idea of "to arrive at, as a goal." The goal Paul had in mind was that of "the resurrection *from* the dead." The New Testament phrase "resurrection *of* the dead" is generic, denoting the general resurrection of the dead, both good and bad. But the phrase the apostle used here signifies the resurrection unto life. It is the same phrase found in 1 Peter 1:3 applied to Christ. Obviously, there was no need for the apostle to express any desire to be resurrected per se since he knew that all the dead will come forth from the grave at the Lord's second coming, whatever their eternal destiny will be (John 5:28,29). But what he did set as his goal was the resurrection unto eternal life in heaven. Cf. Luke 20:35, "But they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead . . ." See Luke 14:14.

The phrase "if by any means" does not deny the apostle's sure and steadfast hope of attaining his goal, nor does it portray any lack of present assurance of being acceptable to Christ, sustained and justified by divine grace; but it does imply his humility, the recognition that unless he gave diligence to maintain a living, working faith in Christ, he would fall from grace and thus fail to reach his goal. See 1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Ephesians 5:5,6; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

12 Not that I have already obtained,—Here the apostle launched into a description of the deficiency in all Christian experience; but he couched it in the first person, which was his tactful and gentle way of rebuking some in Philippi who were inclined to pride themselves in having attained lofty heights of spirituality. Paul began by stating that he had yet to obtain that which he so desired, expressed in verses 8-10; at no time in the past had he appropriated to the fullest measure the knowledge of Christ, the righteousness of God, personal intimacy with Christ, the power of His resurrection, etc. Paul recognized that from the time of his conversion to the present, there was always room for much improvement and progress in these respects.

or am already made perfect:—Paul emphasized his present lack of perfection, his present deficient spiritual condition. In all his growth and progress in the knowledge of Christ, etc., he had yet to reach a state of moral and spiritual perfection, of complete sinlessness. Only when he receives the crown of righteousness will he have been made perfect (2 Timothy 4:7,8). What must we, like the Philippians, say of our spiritual

condition when we realize how few of us, if any, measure up to the moral and spiritual status of the great apostle? See James 3:2; 1 John 1:8.

but I press on,—The verb “press” in the Greek expresses the intense action of a runner in a stadium. The apostle was intensely running toward a fixed goal.

if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.—Paul’s meaning here is, “I would grasp that for which Christ grasped me.” Jesus had laid hold on, grasped or seized, Paul at his conversion so that he could preach the gospel and pattern his life after his perfect example, consequently to receive the crown of righteousness in the world to come. Thus Paul laid hold on, grasped or seized, that which was the Lord’s object for him in his conversion by pressing on in His service, striving continually to become like Him, to the prize waiting for him at the end of the race. In other words, the Lord’s purpose for him became his purpose. See Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:11,12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 12:14,15.

Questions

Verse 5. Discuss thoroughly the confidence Paul might have claimed in the flesh by his being “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, etc.”

Verse 6. Discuss Paul’s zeal in persecuting the church and his blamelessness concerning the law.

Verse 7. Discuss Paul’s counting loss for Christ those things that were gain to him.

Verse 8. What do the words “yea verily” and “count” signify? Discuss Paul’s estimate of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Discuss his actual suffering the loss of all things, counting them as refuse, in order to gain Christ.

Verse 9. What is the meaning of Paul’s desire to be found in Christ? Discuss the righteousness that he desired to have.

Verse 10. Discuss the four things expressed in this verse that the apostle desired.

Verse 11. Discuss Paul’s goal of attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Verse 12. What had Paul not already obtained? Discuss his lack of perfection. What is the import of the words “press on”? Discuss the apostle’s laying hold on that for which he was laid hold on by Christ.

LESSON TEN

3:13-21

13 Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold:—The “I” and “myself” are both emphatic. The significance is, “Whatever others think of me, or whatever others think of themselves, I count not myself to have yet laid hold on or attained to that for which Christ laid hold on me.” After carefully considering the situation regarding himself, the apostle recognized that he was still deficient in the godliness and sanctification for which he had been laid on by Christ at his conversion. He knew that his life still fell short of the perfection of his example Jesus Christ. It is highly probable that some of the Philippian saints had arrived at an opposite conclusion concerning themselves, indicating that the erroneous teaching of sinless perfection is nothing new. Anyone who feels that he has reached the place in life that he no longer commits sins needs not only to consider Paul’s estimate of himself, but also that of John concerning himself and all other Christians (1 John 1:8). But it is to be remembered that the Christian’s imperfections must never be an excuse for spiritual stagnation; he must never be content with any spiritual deficiency but must always *aim* at perfection (Matthew 5:48).

but one thing I do,—Literally in the Greek, “but one thing”; the words “I do” are in italics, being added by the translators. Paul had only one real aim in life, which he previously expressed in 1:21, and which he was now to discuss further. See Matthew 6:22-24.

forgetting the things which are behind,—Paul affirmed that he had forgotten everything of the past that would hinder the progress of the race he was running. He would neither dwell on the attainments nor on the failures of the past. In this sense he had forgotten all his Jewish privileges and attainments, all that part of the Christian race he had already run, all his sins and failures, and all his heartaches, disappointments, and discouragements. There would be no resting on past laurels nor discouragement over past failures to hinder the spiritual progress of the faithful apostle. Such *looking* back could only end in *going* back (Luke 9:62). Cf. Luke 17:32. The import of God’s word is to us as it was to Israel, “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward” (Exodus 14:15).

and stretching forward to the things which are before,—The Greek for “stretching forward” is used only here in the New Testament. The metaphor is that of a foot race, which describes the runner whose “eye outstrips and draws onward the hand, and the hand the foot.” How well this portrays the intensity of the apostle’s efforts in pursuit of the things before him, as he virtually strained himself to become more and

more like his Master, with a greater and greater commitment to His service! See Hebrews 6:1.

14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—The word “press” in the Greek literally means “to pursue.” The word “goal,” Greek *skopen* (*skopos*), originally meant “a mark for shooting at.” As it is used here it means “a spiritual end, target, or goal.” The word “toward” expresses the idea of “bearing down upon” in the direction of a goal. The goal is a life of faithfulness, seeking always the holiness of Christ in one’s life: to fight the good fight, to finish the course, to keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

The words “high calling” literally mean “upward calling,” a calling which is from heaven and to heaven, issued by the heavenly Father through the mediator Jesus Christ. See John 10:9; 14:6; Hebrews 3:1. This calling is not a special calling limited to Paul’s own calling as an apostle of God; but it is the common calling of all Christians to eternal salvation in heaven, the prize given to all who reach the goal. See 1 Peter 5:10. This prize is called “the incorruptible crown” (1 Corinthians 9:24,25), “the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8), “the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10), and “the crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

Eternal life as a *prize* in no way contradicts the teaching of the New Testament that it is a *free gift* of God (Romans 6:23). The Christian never actually reaches the goal of sinless perfection, absolute Christlikeness, in this life (James 3:2; 1 John 1:8,10). But he can be reckoned as reaching this goal by such a faith as continues “to stretch forward,” “to press on,” thus continually to trust in and depend on the power of Christ’s blood to cleanse him from all sin (1 John 1:7). The faithful Christian can thus go into eternity completely free from the guilt of sin, to receive the prize of eternal life as the free gift of God by His wondrous grace. Unquestionably, no Christian can ever earn, achieve, or deserve eternal salvation; but neither can he receive it as the free gift of God if he fails to maintain a living, obedient, trusting faith in the Saviour, never to lose sight of the crown of righteousness. One who has such a faith as this is obedient to the injunction of Colossians 3:1,2, “If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.”

15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect,—The apostle here affirmed that he and some of the Philippian saints were perfect. Yet in verse 12 he asserted that he was not yet perfect. How are we to harmonize this seeming contradiction? In verse 12 the word “perfect” means without sin, absolute conformity to the holiness of Christ beyond which there can be room for improvement. But in verse 15 the word is

used to designate mature Christians, those who have reached the state of relative spiritual maturity but who still have room for development and growth. See 1 Corinthians 2:6; 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:13-14. Cf. 1 John 3:3.

be thus minded:—Spiritually mature Christians are to have the same mind or disposition as expressed in verses 7-14, thus to continue in their spiritual progress and growth.

and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you:—In whatever way any of the Philippian saints differed from the mind commended by Paul, that of complete renunciation of self and the desire to grow continually in Christ, they would receive further instruction from God—assuming, of course, that they were amenable to such instruction. Cf. Galatians 5:10.

16 only, whereunto we have attained, by that same rule let us walk.—The word “rule” is not in the Greek, but has been supplied by the translators. The literal rendering is “walk by the same”; that is, by what “we have attained.” The apostle may have had in mind the spiritual progress already made by the Philippian saints, and he thus commanded them to continue in the same. If that is the import of the verse, it is as if the apostle were saying, “Whatever real moral and spiritual attainment we have made, let that serve as the regulative standard for our further advance.” It may be, however, that the attainment the apostle had in mind was the knowledge of God’s will, and thus it is as if he were saying, “To whatever light of the knowledge of God’s will we have already attained, let us walk by that same light.”

17 Brethren, be ye imitators together of me,—Marvin R. Vincent says that the sense of Paul’s exhortation here is that the Philippians were to “be together, jointly, imitators of Paul.” The apostle did not say this in any self-confident, egotistical spirit; but he did recognize that to the extent he patterned his life after Christ’s it was worthy of imitation by his fellow Christians (1 Corinthians 11:1). Cf. Ephesians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an ensample.—The word “mark” is translated from a word which means “to fix the attention upon with a desire for or interest in, to observe attentively.” The Philippians were to observe attentively those of their fellow Christians who walked as did Paul and the other apostles, with the obvious view of imitating them even as they imitated the apostles, and even as the apostles imitated Christ.

18 For many walk,—How different is the walk of those in the church whom Paul was about to describe, who are backsliders or spiritual adulteresses (James 4:4), from those who imitate the worthy ensample

of the apostles! Paul gave tacit warning to the Philippians that they were to utterly avoid imitating the lives of such evildoers.

of whom I told you often,—When Paul preached in Philippi he was never remiss in taking advantage of every opportunity to give due warning to the Philippians to beware of the leaven of their recalcitrant fellow church members.

and now tell you even weeping,—So intensely did Paul feel grief and sorrow concerning the evil influence of those to whom he alluded that he was moved to literal crying or weeping in writing this portion of his epistle. This tearful, sorrowful spirit should characterize every faithful Christian's denouncement of those in the church who are guilty of hindering the cause of Christ. Such a spirit is actually expressive of love, which "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Cf. Romans 9:2.

that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:—The verse to follow shows that those whom Paul here described as enemies of the cross of Christ were not accused of going astray in doctrine but of sinking back into ungodly living. We are not to conclude that they were avowed enemies of the cross by denying that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save men from their sins. But they were indeed enemies of the cross, even though unwittingly so, because their lives tacitly repudiated its ethical meaning. It is at the cross, the symbol of the Lord's self-renunciation, that sinners crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. The meaning of the cross not only involves reconciliation with God and atonement, but also death to sin, bringing the body into subjection, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we might not serve sin. See Romans 6:6-11; Galatians 2:20.

In so repudiating the ethical meaning of the cross, those over whom the apostle lamented were stumbling blocks in the way of those who had yet to appropriate the saving power of the cross. To the world the cross is a symbol of all that Christianity stands for, and those in the church who are guilty of ungodly living make the cross odious in the eyes of the unsaved. See Hebrews 6:6; 10:29; 2 Peter 2:2. Cf. Galatians 6:14.

19 whose end is perdition,—The opposite of perdition (Greek *apoleia*, loss) is salvation. Cf. 3:20. Those members of the church who persist in living such lives that they are enemies of the cross will have as their end eternal loss (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Ephesians 5:3-6; Hebrews 10:26,27; 2 Peter 2:1: 3:16). But those who persist in living such lives that they are friends of the cross will have as their end eternal salvation (Romans 6:22; 1 Peter 1:9; Revelation 2:10). Cf. Matthew 16:24-28.

whose god is the belly,—See Romans 16:18. If the word "belly" is here to be taken literally, those to whom the apostle referred lived to

eat rather than ate to live. The real purpose of living to them was not to please God but to pamper the belly, so making it their god. Even some pagans branded such sensualists as men who worshipped belly-gods. So Euripides put into the mouth of Cyclops, "I sacrifice to no one but myself; not to the gods, but to this my belly, the greatest of the gods; for to eat and drink each day is the god for wise men."

And what about those in our affluent society whose worship of the belly can lead to such diseases as heart trouble and thus to early death? They would do well to heed the words of Chrysostom: "Thou hast received a belly that thou mayest feed, not distend it; that thou mayest have the mastery over it, not have it the mistress over thee; that it may minister to thee for the nourishment of the other parts, not that thou mayest minister to it; not that thou mayest exceed limits. The sea, when it passes its bounds, doth not work so many evils as the belly doth to our body, together with our soul."

It may be that Paul used the word "belly" to mean sensuality in general, not only gluttony but also drunkenness, fornication, and the other works of the flesh that he designated in Galatians 5:19-21. Cf. 2 Timothy 3:4. Such carnality is definitely involved in the remainder of this verse.

and whose glory is their shame,—The attitude of these sensualists was so perverted and depraved that they actually took pride in their shameful and degraded condition. Instead of being ashamed of their carnality, they gloried in or boasted of it. Cf. Romans 6:21; 1 Corinthians 5:1,2.

who mind earthly things.—This phrase describes the attitude that is directly the opposite of what is required in Colossians 3:1,2. The sensualists whom Paul described, who were guilty of carnality in general, obviously loved the world rather than God. Thus they had succumbed to "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life" (1 John 2:15,16). We are reminded here of Romans 8:5,6, "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace."

20 For our citizenship is in heaven;—The word "citizenship" is from the Greek *politeuma*, literally meaning "commonwealth." The sense Paul most likely had in mind is rendered by Joseph Thayer: "the commonwealth whose citizens we are." The apostle contrasted this description with those "who mind earthly things." The faithful Christian realizes that his eternal abiding place or home is not this transitory world. In the world he is but a stranger, living in temporary exile. Longing to enter into the possession of all the privileges and blessings of his heavenly home, he sows to the Spirit rather than to the flesh, seeking always to

live in harmony with his high destiny. See Galatians 4:26; 6:7,8; Ephesians 2:19; Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22.

“The action of Paul in pleading his rights as a Roman citizen when he was very far off from the city of which he was free, is very illustrative of the use which we ought to make of our citizenship. As he pleaded that he must be treated as a free Roman, and not be beaten, so must we remember our citizenship, and plead it with God, that we may not again be enslaved, so as to glory in our shame and mind earthly things” (M. F. Sadler).

whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:—

The Greek word rendered as “wait for” indicates earnest, patient waiting and expectation. Faithful Christians earnestly and patiently look forward to the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise in John 14:2,3, when He shall complete the saving work which He began at Calvary: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Our high priest Jesus Christ has gone up into the heavenly Holy of holies, not made with hands, to make atonement for us (Hebrews 9:24-26); and as the Israelites stood outside the tabernacle, expecting Aaron’s return, so do faithful Christians look to heaven by the eye of faith, earnestly and patiently expect their Saviour’s return. This expectation is also expressed in the following passages: “So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28); “Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

21 who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation,—The references here is to what the Lord will do regarding those who are resurrected unto eternal life. The present body in which we live is considered as one of “humiliation” because, being mortal, it is subject to all the earthly woes of weariness, pain, sickness, sorrow, tears, sin, etc., and finally to the corruption of death. When we are resurrected the Lord will change all this. The words “fashion anew” indicate in the Greek a change which is outward; that is, of the body, the habitation in which dwells man’s immortal soul. The identity of the individual himself is not changed, but only his body. The fleshly body must be changed into a spiritual body so that the immortal soul will have a fit habitation in which to live in the spiritual realm of heaven. Such a refashioned body will be free from all the woes that men are subject to during their earthly state (Revelation 21:4). See 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

that it may be conformed to the body of his glory,—The ref-

erence here is to the body of the Lord's resurrected glory, which, unlike the fleshly body of His humiliation in which He tabernacled among us (2:8; John 1:14), is spiritual. The resurrected body of the faithful Christian will be conformed to, made in the likeness of, the Lord's glorified body. It will thus be a spiritual body in which his immortal soul will forever dwell to enjoy the infinite blessings of heaven. Cf. 1 John 3:2.

according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself,—The word "working" is from the Greek *energeian* (*energeia*), meaning "power in exercise," used only of superhuman power. By virtue of the fact that He is able to bring all things in subjection to Himself, Jesus has the superhuman power to raise us incorruptibly, conforming us to the body of his glory. See 1 Corinthians 15:27,28.

Questions

Verse 13. Discuss Paul's realization that he had "yet to have laid hold." What is the significance of the "one thing" that he did? What were the things behind which he forgot? What is signified by his "stretching forward to the things that are before"?

Verse 14. Discuss the significance of the words "press," "toward," "goal," "prize," and "high calling."

Verse 15. In what sense can Christians be perfect? What is the disposition of those who are "thus minded"? What will God do for those who are in anything otherwise minded?

Verse 16. What was the rule by which the Philippians were to walk?

Verse 17. Discuss Paul's exhortation for the Philippians to be imitators together of him and to mark them that walked after the same ensample of the apostles.

Verse 18. Discuss Paul's warning to the Philippians concerning those who were enemies of the cross of Christ.

Verse 19. What will be the end of the enemies of the cross? Discuss the phrases "whose god is the belly," "whose glory is in their shame," and "who mind earthly things."

Verse 20. Discuss the significance of the heavenly citizenship of Christians and of their waiting for the return of Christ.

Verse 21. Discuss the wondrous change that shall be wrought in the bodies of all who are resurrected unto eternal life.

LESSON ELEVEN

4:1-7

I Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown,—These sentimental and endearing titles, by which Paul worked his way into the hearts of his Philippian brethren and so encouraged them to faithfulness, are not words of flattery but of sincere love. They remind us of the following excerpts from Paul's first epistle to the church of the Thessalonians: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy" (2:19,20).

The Greek word for "longed for" occurs only here in the New Testament. Kindred words are found in 2 Corinthians 7:7 and Romans 15:23. See notes on "I long after you all" (1:8).

Paul's use here of the word "joy" reminds us of the delectable joy felt by John on hearing of the fidelity of his children: "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John 4). There were indeed imperfections in the Philippian church, as there are in all other churches; but whatever loyalty its members had shown to Christ was a source of great joy to the apostle.

Concerning the meaning of the word "crown," Joseph Lightfoot wrote, "The word must be carefully distinguished from 'diadem.' It means a chaplet or wreath, and the idea it conveys may be either (1) victory, or (2) merriment, as the wreath was worn equally by the conqueror and by the holiday-maker." Both of these ideas are contained in the significance of the crown that the Philippians represented to Paul. His wreath of victory and merriment in his Christian service was composed of the Philippian saints, whom he had won to Christ and encouraged to live faithfully in His service.

The word "wherefore" connects the Philippians' glorious hope of the returning Saviour with their responsibility to obey the following injunction:

so stand fast in the Lord,—The Philippians were to stand fast in the Lord both in His service and in His strength, keeping faithful to Him however adverse their circumstances might be. See 1:27,30; 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:57,58.

my beloved.—Twice in this verse the apostle referred to the Philippians as his beloved, emphasizing how very dear they were to him.

2 I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche,—The two persons named here were quite prominent in the Philippian church, as indicated in the next verse, taking a leading part in the women's work. Euodia means "prosperous journey" and Syntyche means "happy chance." The

word "exhort" is repeated to show that the apostle placed the like obligation on each one of them and with the utmost impartiality.

to be of the same mind—See notes on 2:2. The conflict between Euodia and Syntyche was probably of a personal nature rather than of doctrine since the apostle did not take sides in the matter. When such differences get out of hand they can cause great havoc in the church; thus the need for dealing with them quickly, impartially, and fairly.

in the Lord.—All differences that arise between brethren should be resolved because of their union with Christ and out of love for Him.

3 Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow,—Some commentators affirm that the Greek word rendered as "yokefellow" is a proper name, Syzygus, and that the word "true" is to be explained as, "who art truly, as thy name means, a yokefellow." Such an explanation cannot be completely discountenanced since the name Syzygus has been found in the inscriptions, as is the case also with the names Euodia and Syntyche. Other commentators, however, believe that the one whom Paul designated was Epaphroditus, the bearer of the epistle (2:25); for example, Joseph Lightfoot, who interprets the apostle as saying, "Yes, I ask you my faithful and true yokefellow, who are now by my side, who will deliver this letter to the Philippians, to reconcile them again." But however this person may be identified, we can be certain that he was one of Paul's trusted fellow-workers, truly yoked with the apostle in the gospel ministry.

help these women,—The Greek word for "help" literally means "take hold with." It is the same word used where Martha asked Jesus to bid Mary to lend her a helping hand in the household chores (Luke 10:40). Paul beseeched the yokefellow he addressed to lend a hand *with* these women in their efforts to settle their differences. Such mediation on the part of an understanding, spiritually-minded third party is often most helpful in resolving differences that arise between brethren. One who so mediates is indeed a peacemaker, pronounced blessed by the Lord (Matthew 5:9).

for they labored with me in the gospel,—The word "labored" in the Greek means "strove as athletes," signifying strenuous and agonizing effort. Having so labored with Paul in the gospel, Euodia and Syntyche were well known in the Philippian church. Thus the trouble between them would have an extremely bad influence unless it was settled.

with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers,—Not only had Euodia and Syntyche zealously cooperated with Paul in the Lord's work but also with the rest of his fellow-workers in Philippi, including one named Clement. This name was very common in the Roman world; and there is no reason to conclude that the person referred to here was a so-called bishop of Rome, as some commentators

have supposed, but probably a member of some prominence in the Philip-
pian church.

whose names are written in the book of life.—Cf. Exodus 32:32; Psalms 69:28; Ezekiel 13:9. The phrase “book of life” occurs seven times in Revelation. It designates the register book of those whose “citizenship is in heaven” (3:20). See Luke 10:20. In ancient times, free cities had a register or roll-book containing the names of all those having the right of citizenship. And all who have come to Christ for salvation, to be born anew, are citizens of the heavenly kingdom and thus have their names written in the heavenly register, the book of life. Paul’s use of the phrase implies that he believed his fellow-workers were faithful Christians, who were continuing in the good fight of faith. Cf. Revelation 3:5.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always:—See notes on 3:1. The word “always” implies that Christians are to rejoice even when they are beset by afflictions (1:28-30). As Paul declared, “I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction” (2 Corinthians 7:4).

again I will say, Rejoice,—In here repeating the command to rejoice, Paul emphasized that what is the predominant theme of this epistle should be predominant in the life of all who enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ.

5 Let your forbearance be known unto all men.—The word “forbearance” in the Greek contains the ideas of “yieldingness, sweet reasonableness, not being unduly rigorous.” One who exercises forbearance has consideration for others. He does not urge his rights to the utmost, but is unselfishly willing to yield to the rights of others. He abstains from harshness in dealing with others, making allowances for their weakness and ignorance, knowing how much he stands in need of having allowances made for himself, both by God and man. Concerning forbearance, James Macknight wrote, “It means meekness under provocation, readiness to forgive injuries, equity in the management of business, candour in judging the characters and actions of others, etc.”

Paul especially urged the Philippians to let their forbearance be known to those beyond the pale of the church, “to all men,” because the feuds among them, such as that of Euodia and Syntyche, would hinder the heathen around them from coming to Christ. Indeed, all Christians of every generation must let their forbearing spirit toward each other be known to all men in order to attract them to the Saviour. See Matthew 5:16; John 13:35. And they must also let their forbearance be known to all men by treating sinners with the same loving consideration and kindness that they treat their brethren in Christ, which is also necessary in influencing them to come to Christ.

The Lord is at hand.—Here the apostle ascribed a motive for the exercise of forbearance. When Christians realize that the Lord can return at any time (Mark 13:33), that He will judge at His coming both the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1), they will be constrained to treat others with the mercy involved in the forbearing spirit, knowing that “judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment” (James 2:13).

6 In nothing be anxious;—The word “anxious,” from the Greek *merimnate* (*merimnao*), is here used synonymously with worry, the fearful, fretful, oppressive state of mind that Dr. Smiley Blanton has called “the great modern plague.” The phrase “in nothing” emphatically declares that such anxiety is always wrong, under any and all circumstances. Notice the renderings of various modern versions: “Don’t worry about anything” (*Good News for Modern Man*); “Do not be anxious about anything” (*Weymouth*); “Entertain no worry” (Verkuyl).

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.—The apostle here gives the antidote for anxiety: reliance on the munificence, goodness, and care of God through prayer. In effect, he says, “In all things prayer—in nothing anxiety.” We are reminded of 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.”

The words “prayer and supplication” often occur together, as in Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1; 5:5. The word “prayer” conveys the general idea of intercourse with and dependence on God, while “supplication” conveys the special idea of asking God to supply one’s personal needs. The word “requests” emphasizes the specific petitions included in “supplication”; that is, the things specifically requested. The word “thanksgiving” emphasizes that prayer and supplication must always be accompanied by appreciation of God’s blessings. “Thanksgiving gives effect to prayer, and frees from *anxious carefulness* by making all God’s dealings matter for *praise*, not merely for *resignation*, much less murmuring.” See Acts 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; James 5:13.

7 And the peace of God,—The result of dependence on God for all that one needs to be free from anxiety is *peace*, the very antithesis of the troubled, fretful, fearful, apprehensive mind. It is the *peace of God* because it comes from God and rests in God (John 14:27; 16:33; Colossians 3:15).

which passeth all understanding,—The meaning here may be that the peace of God is so profound that the human mind cannot comprehend its full blessedness. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9,10; Ephesians 3:20. Or the meaning may be that the peace of God is beyond all that the mere reason of man can do to relieve anxiety. “The mind, the highest faculty

of man as such, intended to be guide of life, oftener brings anxiety than a calm heart."

shall guard your hearts and your thoughts—The word "hearts" designates the source of the "thoughts." "Your hearts and their fruits" (Henry Alford). The Greek word for "guard" is a military term, signifying a sentinel who keeps guard over a castle or camp, or a well-garrisoned stronghold (Isaiah 26:1-3). This word is used only in three other places in the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 11:32; Galatians 3:23; 1 Peter 1:5. The peace of God serves as a sentinel or well-garrisoned stronghold to keep one's thoughts and their source protected from everything that would produce anxiety. Thus the promise here is that the praying Christian who relies on the care and protection of God shall have peace secure within, whatever outward troubles may besiege.

in Christ Jesus.—It is in Christ Jesus that faithful Christians are guarded secure by peace from all that would make them anxious. It is in Christ Jesus that men first find the peace of God when they are justified. See Romans 5:1; Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:14. And it is because of His mediatorship that those who are so justified can constantly receive all the help they need from God to be free from anxiety and so enjoy the peace that will guard their hearts and thoughts. See 4:19; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 4:15,16.

Questions

Verse 1. Discuss the sentimental and endearing titles Paul gave the Philippians. How would they stand fast in the Lord?

Verse 2. Discuss the exhortation Paul gave Euodia and Syntyche.

Verse 3. How would the "true yokefellow" obey the apostle's injunction to help Euodia and Syntyche? Why do we have reason to believe that these two women were well known in the Philippian church and thus would have an extremely bad influence unless the trouble between them was settled? Discuss the import of the phrase "whose names are written in the book of life."

Verse 4. Discuss Paul's exhortation to rejoice in the Lord always.

Verse 5. How do Christians obey the command to let their forbearance be known unto all men? Discuss the possible coming of the Lord at any time as a motive for obeying this command.

Verse 6. Discuss the command to be anxious in nothing. What is the antidote for anxiety?

Verse 7. What is the peace of God? In what sense does it pass all understanding? How does it guard the hearts and thoughts of Christians in Christ Jesus?

LESSON TWELVE

4:8-14

8 Finally, brethren,—See notes on 3:1.

whatsoever things are true,—Commentators widely disagree as to the scope of Paul's use here of the word "true," from the Greek *alethe* (*alethes*). Some believe that it designates anything that is true in fact, that conforms to reality: the opposite of all falsehood. Heinrich Meyer's conclusion is that it designates "that which is *morally true*; that is, *that which is in harmony with the objective standard of morality* contained in the gospel." Adam Clarke's conclusion is that it refers to "all that is agreeable to unchangeable and eternal truth. Whether that which is to be learned from the *nature* and *state* of created things, or that which comes immediately from God by revelation."

whatsoever things are honorable,—The word "honorable" in the Greek is *semna* (*semnos*), which was used in classical Greek as an epithet of the gods, meaning, "venerable, reverend." It occurs in only three other instances in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 3:8,11; Titus 2:2, where it is rendered as "grave." "There lies in it the idea of dignity and majesty which is yet inviting and attractive, and which inspires reverence" (Marvin R. Vincent).

whatsoever things are just,—The Greek word for "just" is *dikaia* (*dikaios*), here signifying right conduct in the sense of *doing* good, or *positive* goodness. Cf. Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:12b; James 1:27a.

whatsoever things are pure,—*Hagna* (*hagnos*), the Greek word rendered as "pure," literally signifies that which is untainted, free from all debasing elements. It here designates right conduct in the sense of abstaining from evil, or *negative* goodness. Cf. Titus 2:12a; James 1:27b; 1 Peter 2:1. See 1 John 3:3.

whatsoever things are lovely,—*ProspBILE* (*prospBiles*), the Greek word rendered as "lovely," is used only here in the New Testament. It signifies that which is adapted to excite love, and to endear him who does such things. Walter Pater speaks of it as "the grace of graciousness." One could translate it by the words "winsome, pleasing, amiable." Christians are to be so lovely in life and personality that they will tend to draw out love in those with whom they come in contact.

whatsoever things are of good report;—*Euphema* (*euphemos*), the Greek word rendered as "good report," is also used only here in the New Testament. It literally means "sounding well." Joseph Thayer defines its use here as "things spoken in a kindly spirit, with good-will to others."

if there be any virtue,—*Arete*, "virtue," is only used here in the

writings of Paul. Its only other use in the New Testament with reference to men is in 2 Peter 1:5, where it signifies moral courage and stability, the disposition of heart that causes the Christian to stand for what he knows to be right whatever may be the circumstances of his life. As it is used by Paul it signifies moral excellence, summing up the ethical qualities he enumerates in this verse and any others that are revealed in the word of God. The Christian should strive to incorporate every phase of moral excellence in his life as he seeks to live in harmony with God's will.

and if there be any praise,—The Christian should give attention to anything and everything that is praiseworthy. He should note all that is praiseworthy in others as well as in himself. Cf. 4:9; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Corinthians 13:5. Although he is not to make men's praise his aim, he should so live as to deserve their praise. Cf. John 12:43; Romans 12:17.

think on these things.—The word "think" in the Greek speaks of careful reflection, which is so necessary in bringing about a life of submission to the will and grace of God. Cf. Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:34,35. If we would *do* the will of God, we must first *think* the will of God. The thinking of which Paul exhorts in this verse will naturally result in the doing of which he exhorts in the verse to follow.

9 The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do:—The Philippians were to obey the apostle's precepts and to imitate his example. The first two verbs refer to his conduct as an instructor, when he preached to the Philippians. From him they both learned and received the word of God. The last two verbs refer to his private demeanor, to the kind of life he lived. They had both heard, or learned from others, and seen with their own eyes how he essentially practiced what he preached. Of course, when the apostle set forth himself as an example, he did so in consciousness of what he had said in 3:13,14 and 1 Corinthians 11:1. See 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 and notes on 3:17.

and the God of peace shall be with you.—When the Christian acts as Paul recommends in this verse, he will enjoy the presence of Him who is the author and giver of peace, "the God of peace," thus to enjoy the peace of God. To enjoy the presence of God and His peace, not only must the Christian let his requests be made known to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (4:6,7), but he must also strive to obey the divine will. As works without prayer are in vain, so prayer without works is in vain. Cf. Hebrews 13:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

10 But I rejoice in the Lord greatly,—Not only did Paul feel grateful to the Philippians for their kindness toward him but, above all,

to the gracious Lord who made this kindness possible. The effect of such gratitude was great joy in Him through whom all blessings flow. Cf. James 1:17.

that now at length ye have revived your thought for me;—The apostle now returned to the subject of the Philippians' contribution to his support while he was in Rome, which was long in coming, received "at length," but a most appreciated gift. The words "have revived" are the translation of a word found in the Septuagint in the phrase "have made the dry tree to flourish" (Ezekial 17:24). It means "to sprout, to blossom again." Marvin R. Vincent renders Paul's statement here as, "Ye caused your thinking on my behalf to bloom anew." Henry Alford renders it as, "Ye budded again in caring for my interests." The best rendering in light of the context is the *Expositor's*: "You let your care for me blossom into activity again."

wherein ye did indeed take thought,—The literal rendering of the Greek here is "ye were all along thoughtful." The generosity of the Philippians toward Paul had never died, any more than a tree dies when it sheds its leaves and stands bare through the winter. See 1:5. The revival, or flourishing again, of their thought for the apostle was not in their attitude of generous concern for his welfare, but in the expression of that concern by sending a contribution to him.

but ye lacked opportunity.—Here the apostle made plain that the lack of service rendered him by the Philippians was due to circumstances for which they were not responsible. See Galatians 6:10. This lack of opportunity may have been from want of means or want of a messenger.

II Not that I speak in respect of want:—The apostle had just expressed joy because of the proof the Philippians had given of their concern for him. He would not, however, be understood as saying this from a feeling of *pressing* care, or from any worry concerning his material circumstances. As he was about to say, he willingly and graciously accepted whatever state he was in with the realization of the divine strength he possessed for the continuance of his life and work. Cf. James 4:15.

for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, there to be content.—The "I" is emphatic. In effect, the apostle was saying, "I for my part, whatever others may feel, have learned, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and through the dealings of divine providence (cf. Hebrews 5:8), to be content in every state."

The Greek word for "content," *autarkes*, appears only here in the New Testament. It literally means "self-sufficient." It was a very familiar word in Stoic philosophy, expressing a favorite doctrine of the sect that a man should be sufficient to himself in all things, that by the power of his own will he should be able to resist the shock of adverse circum-

stances. There was, however, no Stoic egotism in Paul's use of the word. He did not claim that his self-sufficiency originated with himself, that it was of his own wisdom and power. The apostle was independent of circumstances, thus self-sufficient, because of his dependence on the Lord. He was only self-sufficient so far as Christ dwelt in him and assured him: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). See 2 Corinthians 3:5; 9:8; 12:7-10; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5,6.

12 I know how to be abased,—In learning to be content in all circumstances, Paul first spoke of knowing how to conduct himself as a Christian when he was "abased." The Greek literally means "to make low, bring low." As it is used here it signifies "to reduce to meaner circumstances, to bring to a humble condition." Even when the apostle was brought to the humble condition of reduced circumstances, or frugal living, he accepted it in a gracious, uncomplaining spirit. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:8; 6:9,10.

and I know also how to abound:—The Greek word for "abound" signifies "have in abundance." The apostle knew not only how to conduct himself as a Christian in reduced circumstances but also when he had an ample supply for all his needs, even more than enough. "He refused to make a wry face because of adversity and to clap his hands in childish glee because of prosperity." The faithful Christian does not allow poverty to degrade him nor prosperity to exalt him.

in everything and in all things have I learned the secret—Everything and all things in the experience of Paul contributed to the learning of which he here spoke. The Greek word *memuēmai*, rendered as "I have learned the secret," literally means "I am initiated. I possess the mystery." It is a metaphor taken from the initiatory rites of the pagan cults. Such initiation was a slow and laborious process. Not without toil, patience, and pain had Paul reached this stage of his seeking for perfection.

both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.—The apostle here elaborated upon and explained the being abased and abounding of which he spoke in the beginning of this verse. The word "filled" in the Greek is the same as in Matthew 5:6, where Jesus spoke of those being "filled" who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." It means "to be satiated," the opposite of being hungry. The word "want" is explanatory of the word "abased." The sum of Paul's affirmation in this verse is that he kept a cool head, his Christian equilibrium and steadfastness, in every circumstance of life. Whether he was full or hungry, prosperous or poor, he conducted himself as a trusting, loving disciple of Christ.

13 I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.—This is the specific reason for the self-sufficiency of verse 11. It is the triumphant

utterance of a man of great faith. The words "strengtheneth me" in the Greek more literally mean "infuses strength in me." Because of his vital union with Christ, through whom "the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24) was infused in him, Paul had all-sufficient strength in all the circumstances of life to bear fruit to the glory of God and to withstand temptation. See John 15:4,5,8; 1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Galatians 2:20; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 2:1; 4:17. Heinrich Meyer observed, "There is *nothing* for which Paul did not feel himself morally strong; for *every* relation he knew himself to be morally adequate. . . . Not in his own human ability does Paul feel this power, but it has its basis *in Christ*, whose *dunamis* [power] the apostle experiences in fellowship of life with Him (2 Cor. 12:9)."

14 Howbeit ye did well that ye had fellowship with my affliction.—The word "howbeit" introduces this statement lest, in declaring his dependence on the Lord's strength, the apostle should seem to disparage the gift of the Philippians. It was well that they had fellowship with Paul in the affliction of his imprisonment because in supplying his wants, since he was unable to labor for his support, they contributed to the furtherance of the gospel through his efforts (1:5) and because they received the greater blessing that always comes from loving, generous giving (Acts 20:35). And it must be remembered that it was the Lord's grace and providence that made possible this gift the Philippians sent Paul, contributing to the advancement of His cause and to His glory. Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-4.

Questions

Verse 8. Discuss the things on which Christians are to think. Why are they to think on these things?

Verse 9. What were the things the Philippians were to do? Discuss the presence of the peace of God with those who obey His will.

Verse 10. Why did Paul rejoice greatly in the Lord? Discuss the continual thoughtfulness of the Philippians concerning Paul's welfare.

Verse 11. Discuss Paul's knowing how to be abased and to abound. Discuss his learning "the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want."

Verse 13. Discuss the strengthening power of Christ that Paul possessed.

Verse 14. Why did the Philippians do well in having fellowship with Paul's affliction?

LESSON THIRTEEN

4:15-23

15 And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians,—The Philippians were well aware, as well as Paul, of the significance of the fellowship they had had with him in his affliction and in furtherance of the gospel. Cf. 2 Peter 1:12,13.

that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia,—The phrase “the beginning of the gospel” refers to the early preaching of the gospel on the European continent, when Paul preached both in Philippi and Thessalonica, having answered the call of the man of Macedonia. The sense of this part of the verse is rendered by Ronald Knox as “when I left Macedonia in those early days of gospel preaching.” The record of Paul’s departure from Macedonia is given in Acts 17:14.

no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only;—Some commentators believe that the fellowship here spoken of is that which the Philippians had with Paul in Corinth, where he subsequently went after leaving Macedonia (Acts 17:15-34; 18:1), basing their conclusion on 2 Corinthians 11:8,9. But they are obviously wrong since the foregoing reference speaks of Paul’s support as coming from “other churches” in Macedonia, whereas in the text now under consideration it is plainly stated that the support the apostle had in mind was from no other church but Philippi. And he pinpointed the receiving of this support at the time of his departure from Macedonia, when he was especially in need of sympathizing aid.

The apostle remained silent as to why other churches did not support him at this time. But to the credit of the Philippians, they did not wait for others in this good work, saying, “We will do so when others do it.” They felt keenly their privilege and responsibility to help the apostle, and they thus acted accordingly. And every individual Christian must assume his responsibility for supporting the preaching of the gospel, even though others may fail to do so. Cf. 2:12; John 21:20-22; Galatians 6:5,10.

The apostle designated the fellowship of the Philippians with him as “the matter of giving and receiving,” which was his way of saying, “In the account between us, the giving was all on your part; the receiving all on mine.” Actually, the words “giving and receiving” are a business term referring to the credit and debit side of the ledger. The Philippians were greatly indebted to Paul since through his preaching they had been brought to Christ and nurtured in the faith. Thus the apostle had certain credits on their ledger that they were obligated to honor. He referred to a similar matter in 1 Corinthians 9:11, “If we sowed unto you spiritual

things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your carnal things?" The context of this passage shows that the "carnal things" are the material support given those who preach the gospel. This responsibility is included in the "all good things" mentioned in Galatians 6:6, "But let him that is taught communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

16 for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need.—Not only did the Philippians support Paul when he departed from Macedonia, but also in his first gospel effort after Philippi when he established a church in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4). Paul's departure from their midst was not to them a matter of "out of sight, out of mind." Their deep affection for the apostle and appreciation for the work he was doing prompted them to keep up with his needs in this first work after Philippi, helping him more than once. This support was in addition to what the apostle was able to supply for himself from the labor of his own hands (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

17 Not that I seek for the gift;—The apostle tacitly defended himself against the slanderous assertion of his enemies that he was using the gospel as a means of making money, or out of covetousness. He did not want the Philippians to remotely draw any conclusion that he was a money-grubber, whose interest in the gospel was to feather his own nest. In no way did he deny the usefulness of the support given him by the grace of God through his brethren, making it possible for him to preach the gospel. But he did insist that his interest in such support involved no self-seeking or selfishness.

but I seek the fruit that increaseth to your account.—Paul was indeed grateful for the gift he had received from the Philippians, recognizing its usefulness in furthering the gospel; but his chief interest in it arose from the good it did those who gave it. The phrase "to your account" is taken from commercial dealings, literally meaning "interest which may accumulate to your account." The apostle desired that when the Philippians appeared before God in judgment, they would receive the fruit, reap the benefit, of all that they had given in his support. We are reminded here of the following passages: "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister" (Hebrews 6:9,10); "Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

In the gift they sent Paul, the Philippians laid up in store for themselves treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), which they would eventually claim in the world to come. The great principle the apostle had in mind when he spoke of the blessings the Philippians would realize from their generosity is that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

18 But I have all things, and abound:—"I have" is the regular expression found in the papyri to indicate the receipt of what is due. "He indicates that the transaction is a debt" (Chrysostom). The significance of "all things, and abound" is that the Philippians had paid the debt they owed Paul in full, and even more, which indicates their great generosity in the gift they sent him. We are reminded here of the liberality of the Israelites in the donation they made for the service of the sanctuary: "And all the wise men . . . spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Jehovah commanded to make. . . . So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much" (Exodus 36:4,5-7).

Since Paul did no begging of the Philippians to receive a gift from them, their generosity was entirely of their own free will, done cheerfully, which is always characteristic of genuinely liberal Christians, who imitate their beloved Master (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:5,7). Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

I am filled,—Here the apostle stated the result of the generosity of the Philippians, affirming that he had enough to meet his material needs, lacking in nothing.

having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you,—The *things* which Epaphroditus brought to Paul probably included clothes and other necessities, as well as money. How Epaphroditus must have been loaded down by the generosity of the Philippians!

an odor of sweet smell,—The allusion here is to the odor of the sacrifices offered to God in the Old Testament. See Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18; Ezekial 20:41. Like these sacrifices, the gift of the Philippians to Paul was considered as being sweet-smelling in God's presence. Cf. 2 Corinthians 2:15, 16; Ephesians 5:2.

a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.—The gift of the Philippians was not so much to Paul as to God (Matthew 25:40). Thus it is designated as an acceptable, well-pleasing sacrifice to God. What the Philippians did, then, in the service of Paul was an act of worship rendered to God. Indeed, when any Christian does anything to help another person, prompted both by his love for the Lord and for the recipient of his good work, he worships God, offering Him a well-pleasing, acceptable sacrifice. "But to do good and communicate forget not:

for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). Cf. Romans 12:1.

19 And my God shall supply every need of yours—"The "my" is emphatic. "The apostle uses the simple future as if he pledged himself for God" (John Eadie). In so referring to "*my* God," Paul implied that God would reward the Philippians' bounty to His servant by "fully supplying" (the literal meaning of the Greek word rendered as "supply") their every need, even as they had "fully supplied" his need (verses 16, 17). "The Philippians invested their bounty well, since it got them such a glorious return." Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Every faithful Christian can be assured that everything he needs will be supplied him by *his* God. That is not only the significance of this phase of Paul's message to the Philippians but also of such passages as the following: "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33); "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38); "And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

according to his riches—The measure of the supply of their need, Paul promised the Philippians, would be the *riches* of God, portrayed in Ephesians 1:7 as "the riches of his grace." The Philippians were generous in their gift to Paul from their limited means, but how much more would God be generous to them from His unlimited store of blessings! The money any Christian gives in support of God's cause, motivated by love, will yield a rich return far beyond any power of his finite mind to comprehend. Cf. Luke 16:9-12. Paul himself knew the riches of God's grace both by revelation and by experience; and thus he could justifiably assure his kind benefactors, and all other such faithful Christians, of God's inexhaustible supply of every need of body and soul, bestowed not grudgingly but with perfect willingness.

The promise here is concerning our *needs*, "every need," what is truly good for us. As James Stacey said, "The promise has a just and obvious limit. God will supply our need. . . . He is the final and righteous Judge of what our needs are. We may not feel the want of what God sees we require. We may desire wealth, or health of body, but God may see that we need spiritual riches and health of soul, and thus to give the latter He may have to withhold the former. Take the case of Paul who prayed for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh. God's response was grace to bear it, and Paul saw that his need was supplied, and then glorified in his infirmity."

in glory—This phrase probably describes the grandeur and greatness

of the divine riches: "greatness of his wealth" (*The Twentieth Century New Testament*); "glorious riches" (W. J. Conybeare); "glorious resources" (J. B. Phillips). Cf. Ephesians 3:20.

in Christ Jesus.—It is because of their union with Christ that faithful Christians, such as the Philippians, enjoy the divine riches in supplying all their needs. See 4:13; John 10:10; 15:5; Ephesians 1:3; 3:8; Colossians 2:10.

Since Jesus is the means through which God's manifold blessings flow to the Christian, it is entirely logical that He should also be the means through which the Christian's thanksgiving flows to God (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17).

20 Now unto our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.—The apostle, having extolled the grandeur and greatness of God's riches in Christ that supply the Christian's every need, now breaks out in doxology. "Doxology flows from the joy of the whole epistle" (Johann Bengel).

"The ascription of praise is the language of spiritual instinct which cannot be repressed. Let the child realize its relation to the Father who feeds it, clothes it, and keeps it in life, who enlightens and guides it, pardons and purifies it, strengthens and upholds it, and all this in Christ Jesus, and it cannot but in its glowing consciousness cry out, 'Now to our God and our Father be the glory for ever.' The 'Amen' is a fitting conclusion. As the lips shut themselves, the heart surveys again the facts and grounds of praise, and adds, 'So be it' " (John Eadie). Cf. Galatians 1:4,5.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.—The phrase "every saint" suggests that each member of the Philippian church was to be saluted or greeted individually. Paul had a feeling of deep affection for all the saints in Philippi, and he wanted to be certain that his tender greeting would be received by each one of them. "The earlier ages of the Church were marked by a spirit of love; so that Christians actually regarded themselves as all members of one family. The moment a man embraced Christianity, he was regarded as a brother by the whole Christian body: a thousand hearts at once beat kindly towards him; and multitudes, who were never likely to see him in the flesh, were instantly one with him in spirit. The love of Christians because they are Christians, no regard being had to country or condition—is this still a strongly marked characteristic of those who profess themselves the disciples of the Redeemer?" (H. Melvill).

The brethren that are with me salute you.—The word "brethren" probably denotes Paul's co-workers mentioned in 1:14 and 2:19, those who were in his own immediate circle.

22 All the saints salute you,—All the Christians in Rome not

included in "the brethren" previously mentioned extended affectionate greetings to their beloved fellow Christians in Philippi.

especially they that are of Caesar's household.—Paul probably specified those whom he mentioned here as an encouragement to the Philippians for them to learn that there were Christians, true believers, in the household of such a wicked person as Nero, the Caesar or emperor at this particular time. "The reference to the saints in Caesar's household may mean either kinsfolk of Nero or servants in the palace. It is improbable that so many near relatives of the emperor should have yielded themselves to Christ as to be designated by this phrase, and it is not likely to suppose that a combination of these two classes would be grouped under one head. In all likelihood the reference is to servants holding more or less important positions in the imperial household—some, no doubt, slaves; and it is a suggestive testimony to the unwearied diligence and influence of the apostle in using every opportunity to make known the saving grace of the gospel. To explain to any the reason for his imprisonment was an occasion for preaching Christ" (George Barlow).

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.—The epistle thus closes with the recognition of Jesus Christ as the means of divine grace, and the invocation of this grace on the spiritual being of its readers.

Questions

Verse 15. Discuss the fellowship the Philippians had with Paul when he departed from Macedonia.

Verse 16. Discuss the Philippians' support of Paul in Thessalonica.

Verse 17. Why did Paul affirm that he did not "seek the gift . . . but the fruit that increaseth to your account"?

Verse 18. Discuss the generosity of the Philippians in the gift they sent Paul by Epaphroditus. In what sense was this gift "an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God"?

Verse 19. Discuss the pledge Paul made for God that He would supply every need of the Philippians according to His riches in glory in Christ.

Verse 20. Discuss the praise that Paul rendered God.

Verse 21. What is the import of every saint that Paul saluted in Philippi? Who were "the brethren" and "all the saints" in Rome that saluted the Philippians? Who were "they that are of Caesar's household," and why did Paul specify them among those who saluted the Philippians?

Verse 23. Discuss the reference to "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" as a fitting conclusion to the epistle.

